Old Corn Gems

No. 120

"And they did eat of the OLD CORN of the land on the morrow after the Passover . . . and the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the OLD CORN of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." Joshua 5:11-12.

A SAFE RULE

"WHERE A BROTHER GIVES AN INTERPRETATION OF A SCRIPTURE WHICH DIFFERS FROM THAT GIVEN BY BROTHER RUSSELL, AND BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION SEEMS REASONABLE AND IN HARMONY WITH THE PLAN OF GOD, THEN WE BELIEVE IT A SAFE RULE TO FOLLOW BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION, FOR THE REASON THAT HE IS THE SERVANT OF THE CHURCH, SO CONSTITUTED BY THE LORD FOR THE LAODICEAN PERIOD; AND THEREFORE WE SHOULD EXPECT THE LORD TO TEACH US THROUGH HIM. WHERE THERE ARISES A DOUBT IN THE MIND AS TO WHICH INTERPRETATION IS CORRECT, THEN IT IS ALWAYS SAFER TO RESOLVE THAT DOUBT IN FAVOR OF BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION. WE BELIEVE SUCH TO BE IN HARMONY WITH THE LORD'S WILL."—Z. '18:51.

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Year Text

Finally, Brethren, be joyful, secure perfection of character, take courage, be of one mind, live in peace—and then GOD who gives love and peace will be with you.

—2 Cor. 13:11 Weym.

1924

New Year Greetings

"Finally, Brethren, Think on These Things"

The End or Conclusion

> "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are reputable, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things."—Phil. 4: 8.

FEW seem to realize the power of the mind, the power of thought, as an element in the formation of character. "As a man thinketh so is he." How important, then, it is that we should think properly—that our minds should be rightly directed. The Scriptures assure us, and the experiences of the noblest people of the world convince us, that we have all so inherited degeneracy from our father Adam, that "there is none righteous, no not one: all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." This degeneracy affects us physically—we are a dying race under the Creator's sentence, "Dying thou shalt die." And this dying affects us not only physically but mentally and morally. "We are prone to sin as the sparks to fly upward." The taint is in us from our birth, for were we not "born in sin and shapen in iniquity"?

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Human Regulations Necessary

There are various methods of appealing to humanity, the success of each varying with the individual. Some need imprisonment and "stripes," others can be profited by moral suasion, by appeal to their reason, by appeal to the better elements of their natures, even though tainted or tarnished through original sin. Both of these methods of appeal are recognized in the world to-day. Pulpits and newspapers are appealing to the minds of men with, more or less propriety and with more or less success; but nevertheless society protects itself by penal institutions—reformatories, jails, penitentiaries, etc. So it is with the divine government. Nature has some general laws by which the whole world of mankind is dominated—laws of retribution, by which every virtue brings a certain degree of reward, satisfaction and peace, and every crime brings a certain measure of chastisement, pain, trouble and unrest.

The act of Persuasion

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Nevertheless, the course of nature is so disordered in the present time by the prevalence of sin and its penalty and the operation of the laws of heredity that we cannot say that the laws of nature are at the present time absolutely just as respects each individual, whatever we may say of their general justice in respect to the race as a whole. Hence, as the Scriptures declare, "some men's sins go before to judgment and some they follow after."

Continence

In the coming millennial age, when Christ's Kingdom shall administer justice amongst men, the rewards and punishments will be equitable. No longer will the child suffer for the sins of the parents. No longer will the righteous suffer; but only the evil-doers, for thus it is written. (Jer. 31:29; Psa. 72:7.) In that blessed time the Lord will use both methods of appealing to the world. (1) An appeal will be made to their hearts and consciences, with inducements and rewards for obedience to the principles of righteousness—the reward of physical, mental and moral restitution or uplift, which will bring the obedient gradually back to the full image and likeness of God enjoyed by father Adam before his fall. (2) This appeal to

Just Honest

the hearts and consciences of mankind will be supplemented by stripes, judgments, chastisements "upon every soul of man that doeth evil." We can to some degree realize the great advantage that will accrue to mankind under such dealings—how great will be the assistance.

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The Lord's Method at the Present Time

In the present age the Lord does not use this double method of appeal, but merely the first. He appeals to our hearts, our reasons, saying, "Come, let us reason together." But those who will not reason with the Lord now are not chastised, even if they go into grievous sins. The worldly are permitted to take their course; they receive no particular stripes or corrections from the Lord, because the day of the world's trial or judgment has not yet come. As the Apostle says, "The wicked shall do wickedly and none of the wicked shall understand"; and so we have on every hand sin, wickedness abounding, and that without interference from the Lord. Only with one class is the Lord now dealing. We recognize, of course, that there is a divine supervision over the nations; that the Lord has kept in his own power more or less of the times and bounds of the nations, as the Apostle expresses the matter. (Acts 17:26.) However, these dealings with the nations have little to do with the world as individuals, and nothing to do with the world's trial, which belongs to the next age. "God hath appointed a day [the millennial day—a day with the Lord is as a thousand years] in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath afore ordained"—the Christ, head and body.—Acts 17:31; 1 Cor. 6:2.

We repeat, then, that the Lord's special dealings at the present time are with those who believe and not with unbelievers. . . .

How God Works in Us to Will and to Do.

It is in harmony with this thought that God is now operating along the lines of appeal to our sentiments and not along the lines of force. As the Apostle says: "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." God works through the intellect and heart. He makes known "the riches of his grace" little by little as we are able to appreciate and willing to respond.

The first effect of this upon the proper heart is to induce a responsive sentiment, expressed by the Apostle thus: "The love of Christ constraineth us: for we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that we who live should henceforth live not to ourselves, but to him who died for us." (2 Cor. 5:14.) The class represented in this text have experienced the Truth working in them as the power of God up to the point of willing—willing to do the Lord's will; willing to renounce self; willing to follow in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus; willing to be copies of God's dear Son. The power of God continues to operate in such and unfolds to them more and more of the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the love of God which passeth all understanding, and which is expressed to these in the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the divine Word.

These promises operate upon the heart and mind and lead to works — obedience, self-denial, self-sacrifice—even unto death. It is such as are thus rightly exercised by divine grace and truth who may now hope to attain to all the great and wonderful things which God hath in reservation for them that love him.

Not only does God thus appeal to our minds, our thoughts, our reasoning faculties, with his explanation of right and wrong, truth and untruth, righteousness and sin, and promises of his continued favor unto life eternal, or for the disobedient his disfavor unto cutting off from life in the second death; but he urges upon us co-operation with him along the same lines—that we take hold of our minds, of our thoughts, and shape them into conformity with the divine mind, with the divine will.

This is the signification of our text: On the principle that every thought has its influence upon our words and conduct, the Apostle urges that our thoughts be the special objects of our solicitude, care, watchfulness. Our Redeemer expresses the same sentiment in different language saying, "Out of the abundance of the heart [mind] the mouth speaketh." And out of the heart (mind) proceedeth envies, malice, strife, etc.,—or contrariwise kindness, gentleness, goodness, love.

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Importance of a Right Heart

It is all important, then, that we have right hearts; for as a bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet waters, neither can a heart that is in the bitterness of sin send forth blessing to those in contact with it. We admit that a certain amount of refinement and grace belonging to the children of God may be copied by the unregenerate, but it has no depth, it fails easily, it quickly discloses the real bitterness, selfishness and acrimony of the natural heart which underlies.

Bitterness

In the present time, therefore, the Lord does not appeal to these bitter hearts to send forth sweet waters. The appeals of the Scriptures are to the regenerated hearts of consecrated believers, addressed in all the epistles as "saints," "children of God," "the sanctified in Christ Jesus," "the Lord's brethren," etc. These having new hearts, new wills, sanctified or set apart to the Lord, to righteousness, to truth, to goodness, need nevertheless to keep watch over their every deed, word and thought.

Produce

Our text is the apostle's appeal to this class along this line. It is well that we should scan our outward conduct, to take note that our good intentions may not be so exhibited to others that they will misapprehend our real sentiments—"Let not your good be evil spoken of." It is right, too, that we should "set a guard upon our mouth lest we should sin with our lips," lest our words be such as would not be honoring to the Lord or edifying to the brethren or to the world. But the number of watchmen or pickets doing duty and standing guard over our actions and words will be fewer in proportion as the picket line guarding our minds, our thoughts, is a strong one. It is here that we need to be especially on the alert.

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." This general truth is particularly exemplified in the regenerate, who are more open in their conduct and language, proportionately, than others. Having the right sentiments at heart they are less on their guard in respect to their manner of expression perhaps than previously; but all the more, they need to remember the words of the Apostle. "If any man sin not with his lips, the same is a perfect man."—Jas. 3:2.

Likelihood of Error.

The inference is that even the most advanced of the Lord's people are liable at times to err with their lips. Hence the appropriateness, to all of the Lord's people, of the prayer, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer."—Psa. 19:14.

Before coming more particularly to the items of our text let us briefly glance at the preceding context; for we notice that the Apostle introduces the text with the word "Finally." What comes before Finally? Let us see. His words are, "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand: be not worried about anything: but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and minds [thoughts] in Christ Jesus."

What a wonderful exhortation this is! Those of us who are able to do so will do well to take the entire four verses for our Scripture text for the new year. The Christian is not to be sorrowful and moping. If he is a true Christian and understands the Father's message he must rejoice. True, as the Apostle elsewhere remarks, through manifold trials, discouragements, weaknesses, etc., there may be moments of dejection and sorrow; but these are only like the sun-showers of the summer-time. To the true followers of the Lord, instructed through his Word, the light of the Lord's kindness shines through all earth-born clouds and troubles, to bring him joy and peace and blessing.

Forgetting the Things Behind.

At the present time, at the close of the old year and the dawning of a new one, it is especially appropriate that the Lord's people should clearly apprehend the great lesson which the Apostle is here inculcating and which he also taught in another place, saying, "Forget the things which are behind, and press forward to things which are before." In the year that is past every enlightened and proper-minded child of God will be able to discern both weakness and success, defeats and victories. We know this because "There is none righteous, no not one"—none that come fully up to the mark of perfection.

Hence all may look back and find in the year that is closing sources of regret as well as sources of joy and comfort. Are we to mourn over the failures of the past? Is this the will of the Lord concerning us—that we should stop, because we find that we have not been able to walk perfectly in every particular—not even up to our own imperfect standards? Nay, verily! With the Apostle we exclaim, "Let us go on to perfection."

Perfection is not a thing of the past, but of the future. We cannot be satisfied with the past but we "shall be satisfied when we awake in his likeness," sharers in the glorious first resurrection. For this we are pressing along, forgetting the things that are behind.

We forget the things that are behind, because it is right that we should do so. Because God forgets them, and declares that he has cast all of our imperfections behind his back: that our imperfections are all covered from his sight, by the merit of him who loved us and who died for us, and whom we love, and in whom we are trusting, and in whose steps we are seeking to walk with more or less of imperfection according to the defects we have inherited in the flesh. We are not meaning to suggest that slips or failures should be lightly esteemed or quickly forgotten; they should be rectified to the extent of our ability, and Divine forgiveness should be sought for these defects daily.

It is for this very purpose that the Lord has provided access to the "throne of heavenly grace, where we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need." We merely mean that it is the Lord's will respecting us that, having corrected errors to the best of our ability, and having appealed for Divine forgiveness, we should believe the word of the Lord and accept his forgiveness and start afresh with rejoicing with each new day—and now start afresh for the new year, 1924.

Cultivation of Gentleness

"Gentleness," the forbearance or moderation mentioned in the context, is to be cultivated by each of us to such an extent that it will not only be manifested to ourselves and to the brethren, but to others. This may not mean the same amount of gentleness in each of the Lord's people, because the treasure of the new mind is in earthen vessels in every instance; and the possibilities for one may exceed the abilities of another. But, in any event, this quality of gentleness (moderation or forbearance) should be increasingly an outward manifestation of the grace of the Lord, dwelling in us richly and abounding, so that those who have known us in the past will at least be able year by year to see in us progress, development along this line.

We have already referred to the necessity for prayer, supplication, mentioned by the Apostle. We now observe that those who are dwelling in close fellowship with the Lord will be so appreciative of the favors and blessings already enjoyed that they will not feel like asking for greater blessings, but rather like giving thanks with a realization that they have already received not only more than they deserved at the Lord's hands, but more than they could have asked or thought. And what has already been received is only a foretaste of the promised coming blessings.

Our requests should be, increasingly, for grace and wisdom and the fruits of the spirit and opportunities for serving the Lord and the brethren, and for growing more and more into the likeness of God's dear Son.

Under these conditions who can doubt that the promised "peace of God beyond all understanding" would "guard" such "hearts" and their "thoughts"? This peace would of itself dispel one of the great evils that afflict the hearts of many. Selfishness and ambition would find little room in a heart so filled with gratitude. God's peace, and not merely the peace of the world, would reign in such a heart, controlling ambitions and energies. Divine peace can dwell in our hearts and rule in them, so as to keep out the worry and turmoil of the world, even when we are surrounded by these disadvantageous conditions—even when the adversary himself is besetting us through deceived agents.

Next Sunday Morn

Emptied of the Old; Filled With the New

Then comes our text, suggesting that, with this peace ruling in our hearts, and keeping guard over our thoughts, so that they are spared from many of the intrusions of the world, the flesh and the devil, we should see to it that our hearts are not merely barren and empty of evil, but should give our thoughts food even as we provide sustenance for our bodies. We should see that their exercise is in a proper direction to produce proper and helpful conditions.

We all know how easy it is to allow the old natural mind to assert itself, to allow envy, gossip, backbiting, malice, strife, pride, vain-glory, to enter our minds and to absorb time and attention. We all know that these need to be continually repelled; but all do not know how necessary it is that, while repelling these, we invite into our minds proper thoughts that will fill them and thus effectually bar the way and hinder the coming again of evil thoughts.

It is along this line that the Apostle exhorts, that we believe it will be profitable for us all to specially exercise our attention during the year just at hand. While thanking God for the forgiveness of sins and for the new hearts, new wills, which we have attained by his grace, let us keep guard over our thoughts—let us exercise them upon the lines the Apostle lays down in this text.

Nov 29

"Whatsoever things are true." The Lord's people are to be so in accord with righteousness that everything that is false or unjust or untrue in word, thought or act will be offensive to them—cause them pain. Truthfulness, then, must be the first test to apply to any matter that will be accepted by our minds. It is not for us to waste our time and attention chasing imaginary matters, errors, fictions, etc. First of all, we want to know. Is it true? . . .

The Thoughts We Should Entertain.

"Whatsoever things are honorable." This is a second test of what our thoughts should be permitted to rest upon. We cannot avoid the intrusion of thoughts which our judgments would disprove, but we must scrutinize and test our thoughts, as they present themselves, and must refuse to entertain or harbor those which are ignoble, dishonorable, unworthy of us as human beings, and especially as members of the new creation, "the body of Christ." Many things may be true which are not honorable, and their truthfulness must not give them a resting-place in our minds if they will not stand this second test.

"Whatsoever things are just," or equitable. This is the third test which the Apostle would have us apply as we scrutinize suggestions made to our minds from any quarter. Things might be true and might be honorable so far as the principles were concerned, and yet not be just or equitable to others. A story might reach us of an honorable exploit of some friend; we might know it to be true, and yet it might reflect against some one else unfavorably, unjustly, inequitably. If so, the thought must not be entertained, but must be repelled.

"Whatsoever things are pure." This is the fourth test which the Apostle urges us to apply to our thoughts as they present themselves from any quarter. Many things are true, just and perhaps not dishonorable that are not pure—calculated to awaken impure desires. Such things are strictly barred according to this inspired rule.

"Whatsoever things are lovely." This is the fifth test. Amongst true, honorable, just, pure things which we may properly consider, there is a variety, some more and some less lovely, some more and some less admirable; and our thoughts, the Apostle suggests, should give preference to the lovely and loveable as being more ennobling, more calculated to lift us and profit us, and hence more inclined to help others through us; because our influence with others is on a parity with our mental status.

"Out of the abundance of the heart [the mind] the mouth speaketh"; and hence those who follow this counsel of the Apostle will be found more and more speaking nothing but the truth, and avoiding truths that are not honorable, or not just and equitable, or not pure; and preferring especially those topics for meditation that are lovely. What a lovely character would be assured in one who could strictly and completely follow the Apostle's advice herein given. He would be a copy of Jesus—just what we all wish to be. None of us can attain this.

"Whatsoever things are reputable, possessing any virtue or any praise." By this expression the Apostle seems to throw out general lines of test and examination. His words imply that we should have a scrutiny of our thoughts to the intent that only things that could be profitable to us and to others should be entertained, considered, discussed. Frivolous things would be excluded also by this test. Who will not admit that a mind thus freed from rubbish and evil and allowed only to entertain true, good, clean, profitable thoughts would be a mind which the Lord would be pleased with and which would conduce to the development of the character-likeness of our Lord Jesus, which is demanded of us if we would be his joint-heirs in the kingdom.—Rom. 8:29.

"Perfect As Your Father in Heaven."

The standard which the Apostle has here raised resembles the standard which our Lord raised before us when he said, "Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." We cannot be perfect as the Father is perfect, but we can and do aim at that perfection; and whatever we come short in while thus endeavoring is made up to us of the Lord's grace through the merit of the precious blood. Likewise we cannot hope to attain so complete a control of our thoughts as the Apostle's words in this beautiful text suggest, but we can make that our standard; and in proportion as we view this standard and daily strive to measure up to it, in that sense and proportion no doubt we will have a blessing every day. . . .

The scriptural proposition is that even the most saintly of the Lord's people, the most developed in character, will need the merit of Christ's righteousness imputed to them until they are made perfect in the first resurrection. Only in our minds, in our wills, have the old things passed away and all things become new. Actually, this great change will be accomplished when this mortal shall . . . be raised in glory, in power. But meantime, it is required of us that we shall demonstrate our willingness of mind, our earnest desire to be all that the Lord would have us be; and in no way can this be better demonstrated to the Lord and to ourselves, or prove more helpful, than by keeping a strict surveillance of our hearts and of our thoughts. The Lord's blessing will surely be upon all who shall seek to follow this word of his grace during the new year.—Z. '04:21-25.

B. Cooper

Grow in Grace

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen."—2 Pet. 3:17, 18.

THERE is a touching tenderness in the Epistles of the aged Apostle Peter to the household of faith, showing that, while he realized that the time of his departure was drawing nigh (2 Pet. 1:14; John 21:18, 19), his solicitude for the growth and development of the Church was increasing. Accordingly, he writes two general epistles, not so much to advance new truth, as to call to remembrance truths already learned and fully received (2 Pet. 1:12-15), and to counsel all to faithfulness and to growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In the preceding verses he has been calling to mind some of these truths, and he recognizes the fact that those addressed are already established in them. . . .

Peter's counsel is not to waste valuable time in investigating "the errors of the wicked," but, on the contrary, to endeavor the more earnestly to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ," who is the way, the truth and the life. The more thorough our knowledge of the Lord, and the more intimate our acquaintance with him, the more secure we are in our own steadfastness.

But what is it to grow in grace? It is to grow in favor with the Lord through an intimate personal acquaintance and fellowship of spirit with him. It implies, first, a knowledge and recognition on our part of our redemption through his precious blood and a personal faith in and dependence upon all the promises of the Father made to us through him, and then an intimate communion with him in our daily life of prayer, and of observation of his will and obedience to it. If such be our constant attitude of mind and heart, there must be a constant ripening of the fruits of the Spirit, rendering us more and more pleasing and acceptable to our Lord. A sense of the divine acceptance and favor is given to us from day to day in increasing measure, in fulfilment of that blessed promise of our Lord, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."—John 14:23.

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This, as nearly as words can express it, is what it is to grow in grace; but the full and blessed understanding of it is best appreciated by those who from day to day walk with God in faith and obedience and love.

To grow thus in grace and not grow in knowledge is impossible; for the very object of such communion is to build us up in a more perfect knowledge and acquaintance with the Lord—to bring us into closer fellowship with the divine plan, and to give us the privilege of being co-workers together with him in executing that plan. If, therefore, we love and obey the Lord and desire to grow in his favor, his written Word is our daily meditation and study, and thus we grow in knowledge: not, however, by finding out each year that what we learned last year was false, but by adding to what we learned last year, by putting on more and more of the armor of God until we realize its glorious completeness in the full discernment of the divine plan of the ages. We are then ready to do valiant service for the cause of truth in withstanding the encroachment of error (Eph. 6:10-13), being established, strengthened and settled in the faith. (1 Pet. 5:10.) But even to those thus established in the faith there is abundant opportunity to grow in knowledge; for while they will see nothing new or different in outline or design, they will be continually charmed and cheered with newly discovered lines of harmony and beauty in the divine drawings of the wonderful plan of the ages. As pupils we may ever study the master workmanship of the Divine Architect.

"And still new beauties shall we see,
And still increasing light."

—Z. '92:315-317.

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While it is well for the stronger brethren to pray with and company with the weaker sometimes, for the assistance of the latter, it is well also that kindred spirits should come together in communion with each other and with the Lord.—Z. '02:8.

"In the Days of Thy Youth"

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."—Eccl. 12:1.

THOSE of the Lord's children who early gave their hearts to him and committed their way to his guidance can all bear testimony to multiplied blessings as the results of that early start in the right way. And we are glad to see some very young people among us now taking the first steps in the ways of life. To all such young pilgrims we would say, God bless you! You are starting out as young soldiers of the cross, and we want you to be brave and true soldiers, and to remember that the first duty of a soldier is obedience to the Captain—Jesus Christ. Give close attention and try to understand what he would have you do, and then be very prompt to obey, whether or not you are able to comprehend the wisdom of his directions.

It is a question with many how early in life a child may give its heart to God and be fully consecrated to him. But the Scriptures make very plain the fact that they may and should be consecrated to the Lord by their parents before their birth . . . and that with the dawn of intelligence this disposition should begin to be cultivated and warmed into vital, active piety, so that at a very tender age the little ones may intelligently ratify the parental covenant of entire consecration to God. This they should be expected and led to do as early as possible.

Of such early consecration to the Lord we have many notable examples in the Scriptures. Of John the Baptist it is said that his parents "were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," and that John was given them in answer to prayer—"filled with the holy spirit, even from his mother's womb." (Luke 1:6, 15, 44, 66, 80.) Paul was similarly endowed from his birth (Gal. 1:15; Acts 26:4, 5), and was zealous toward God long before his conversion from Judaism to Christianity. (Acts 22:3, 4.) So also were Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11, 24-28; 2:11, 18, 19) and Moses.—Exod. 2:1.

Those thus early devoted to the Lord escape many a snare and many an entanglement, which in later years bring distress and trouble to so many. They do not have to reap the bitter harvest that always comes from the sowing of "wild oats"; they do not find it so much against the current of their nature to live godly lives; and they have in later years the strength of character born of continued self-discipline and self-restraint, and all the blessed advantages of a long acquaintance with God and of the instructions of his Word and of the leadings of his gracious providences.

How wise is the counsel, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth—while the evil days come not," etc. Those evil days of bitter disappointment and despair never will come to those who in youth commit their ways unto the Lord, and trust him to guide their paths. His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. They are not by any means smooth and easy ways, but they are always peaceful and pleasant, because he who has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5), is always present to comfort and to bless, and to make all things work together for good to those who love God—the called ones according to his purpose.

Those of the consecrated who have children and young people under their care have much to do in shaping their course and in leading them to Christ, by throwing around them the influences of their own consecrated lives, and imparting to them such instruction as their own acquaintance with the truth and their more matured experience and judgment can give. Such efforts, properly directed, are not lost upon the young.

Let them see both in your example and teaching how distinctly the line is drawn between the consecrated believer and the world;—that there is no compromise with the world: that to follow Christ is to renounce the world with all its ambitions, its gayety and its pleasures and companionship. Let them see the hollowness of worldly pleasures, and improve occasions for calling attention to the dissatisfaction and unrest of those who pursue the delusions, and the peace and joy of those who have left the world to follow Christ. It is helpful also to tell how graciously the Lord has led us, to speak of the various turning points in our course, where the friendly crook of the Good Shepherd kept us from straying away into the wrong path; or how when once we strayed his mercy tenderly pursued us and brought us back to his fold; how he has shielded us from evil; comforted us in sorrow; satisfied our longing souls with the joys of his salvation; and made us to sit down with him in heavenly places.

Before the mind becomes engrossed with the frivolities of this world it is easily led by wise and loving hearts; and none should lose these precious opportunities, which a few years later may bring forth a rich harvest to the Master's praise. . . . Many consecrated parents have these privileges every day; and many others come in contact with the young and forget to let their light shine upon them, under the erroneous impression that they cannot be expected to understand or to have any spiritual aspirations.

It is a great mistake to presume that the young must first run in the race of pride, ambition, frivolity and folly with the world, and then be converted to God. It is the business of those who have to do with them to shield them as far as possible against such influences, and to help them to center their affections and hopes in God before the world throws its ensnaring charms about them.

To all the dear children and young people who have given their hearts to God, and who are trying daily to follow Jesus, the Old Corn Gems sends its greeting. We know some of the very little ones who love Jesus, and who are not ashamed to stand up for Jesus among other children who do not love him or try to please him; and who are brave and true to God, even when laughed at and thought peculiar by their school-mates to whom they tell the good news of the Kingdom. And we are rejoiced to see some young people, who have bravely renounced the world and its ambitions and pleasures, among the most faithful of those who have consecrated their lives to the Lord.

May the good work go on in the deepening and widening course. Let the young rejoice in the prospects of great usefulness in the Lord's service; let those of maturer years . . . stand as beacon lights to others and at the end of their course be able to testify, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith."—Z. '94: 218-220.

Lending to the Lord

2 Cor. 9:1-11.

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, tho he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."—2 Cor. 8: 9.

OUR lesson inculcates Christian benevolence—alms giving. It is addressed to the Corinthian Christians and is on behalf of Christians in and about Jerusalem. A question arises why collections should be made for the Christians at Jerusalem more than for the Christians at Corinth. There were three reasons: (1) A severe famine had prevailed in the vicinity of Jerusalem. (2) Jerusalem was not a commercial city, and therefore money was less plentiful. (3) It would appear that the classes who received the gospel in and about Jerusalem were chiefly the poor, and we can readily judge from the open persecutions of the truth there that there was also a great deal of quiet opposition to all who sympathized with the gospel of Christ. As small shop people they were probably boycotted; and as laborers they probably were as far as possible rejected except as necessity might demand their services. On the contrary, the cities of Greece, Macedonia and Asia-Minor were prosperous; and as far as we may judge the class of society which accepted the gospel was in many cases the better element.

This was indicated in Acts 19:31 by the statement that the "chiefs of Asia" dissuaded Paul from going before the people at the colosseum. These chiefs of Asia were generally quite wealthy and prominent men. We remember also in the same lesson the fact that the books of magic, which were burned after the owners had accepted Christ, represented a very large amount of money. Probably, therefore, their owners were correspondingly wealthy. We remember also the favorable decision of the town clerk at Ephesus; and the fact that Tyranus was so in sympathy with the Apostle's teaching as to permit the use of his schoolroom. We recall the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the deputy governor, at Paphos; also Dionysius, one of the professors in Mars Hill college at Athens; and Damaris of the same city; and Justus of Corinth; and Crispus, chief ruler of the synagogue in the same city.

The question naturally arises, Why should the same gospel attract the well-to do and middle classes in Greece and Asia-Minor and Thessalonica, and attract few outside the poorer class at Jerusalem? The answer would seem to be (1) that among the Jews who had long been acquainted with the true God, the true religion and the gracious promises of the Messiah, a **religious pride** had developed, especially amongst the wealthy and the learned. And because their religious system was in advance of every other religious system in the world, the learned attributed a like superiority to themselves individually—they "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others."

This was the secret of Israel's being "blinded" to the gospel. The leaders and theologians were so self-conscious, and relied so implicitly upon their interpretations of the divine promises as centering in themselves, that they could not regard the humble Nazarene and his unlearned followers except as impostors. And when, later, the gospel began to be preached to the Gentiles their opposition was increased; for it was utterly contrary to every thought of their religious pride that God would accept either the humble Jews or the Gentiles to his favor, and reject themselves, the leading representatives of his cause and work.

But amongst the Gentiles the case was very different: while the illiterate masses were firmly bound in the superstition of their various religions, those who were of an honest mind among the better educated were quick to discern that many of the features of their own religions were superstitions merely. They had probably, previously, been somewhat attracted to the Jewish religion as being much more reasonable than their own, as we find that the Gentiles readily resorted to the Jewish synagogues; but the Jewish religion would necessarily be unsatisfactory to them since it would appear to be very narrow, limiting the divine blessings in a special manner to Israelites—a people whom they considered rather inferiors in the arts at that time. But, the gospel, throwing wide open the door to those who desired righteousness, truth and goodness, of every nation, people, kindred and tongue, would naturally commend itself to the class we describe as being the most reasonable explanation of the Jewish doctrines and their grand eventual outcome, and long hidden meaning.

At all events, the saints at Jerusalem were poorer than were the saints in Corinth. It was therefore appropriate that the Apostle should suggest to the latter the propriety of sending a gift to the former. Living at a time when the conveniences for transferring money were very inferior to the very poorest known to-day, the only possible method seemed to be that the various congregations should send their gifts at the hand of the Apostle when he would go to Jerusalem the following year. And Paul's words intimate that the suggestion made by him nearly a year before, to the Corinthian brethren, had been well received, and the collections zealously entered upon. For this reason it was "superfluous" for him to write in this connection particulars respecting the necessity for and propriety of this collection; but he hints to them that there was a bare possibility that the work zealously begun a year before might not have been patiently carried out, and that after he had boasted somewhat to others of their love and zeal for the Lord, he would regret if coming to them, enroute to Jerusalem, it should be found that after all they had failed to have their donation ready.

In his previous epistle to the Corinthians he had suggested methodical charity, saying, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given instructions to the Churches at Galatia, even so do ye. On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gathering when I come."

It was the Apostle's experience, as it is the experience of all thoughtful people, that systematic charity is better than spasmodic charity; not only is the result generally larger, but the influence upon the giver is more beneficial; it keeps an object before the mind, a service to be rendered as unto the Lord. And with many the opportunity for serving the Lord's cause with money is almost the only opportunity for service. Of course, where a consecrated child of God can do so it is far better that he should give to the saints after the manner of Paul and his traveling associates—giving spiritual gifts and blessings. . . .

But there are others so circumstanced in life through lack of talent, or strength, or opportunity (hindered by prior mortgages upon their time—family obligations) that practically their only chance for serving the Lord and manifesting their love for him is through their gifts to his cause and to his people. For such to be deprived of the opportunity of exercising themselves in the Lord's service in this manner either through a lack of a cause needing their assistance, or through lack of instruction respecting this method of divine service, would be to deprive them of an important opportunity of service, and correspondingly to deprive them of the blessings which always follow every service to the Lord, whatever its character.

We notice, therefore, that the Apostle felt very free to recommend to the Church the grace of giving and to even press upon them the fact that their liberality in proportion to their ability, would in a large degree be an index of their love for the Lord and the gospel. But, here we note in contrast, that the same Apostle did not ask alms of these believers when first they received the Lord's grace; lest they should in any manner get the impression that the gospel was being preached from mercenary motives—for lucre's sake. Accordingly, we find that rather than mention money the Apostle preached to these very same Corinthian brethren for more than a year without a suggestion as to remuneration; laboring with his own hands at his trade of tent-making, rather than be chargeable to any. He reminds them of this later on in this same epistle.—2 Cor. 11:7-9.

Let us note also the change which the full appreciation of the gospel wrought upon the believers at Corinth. At first they were so negligent of their privilege that seemingly they never thought of volunteering financial assistance to the Apostle while he was serving them by the labor of his own hands, and receiving some assistance from believers in other places. But, after the grace of God entered more fully into their hearts and they began to appreciate the value of the truth which they had received,—that it had brought them priceless blessings of hope and joy and faith and character—they had a zeal, a "forwardness" to do something financially in the Lord's service. And now that the Apostle was absent from them, and after his course had proved to them that he sought not their money but themselves, to do them good; he felt free to draw their attention to the great blessing that would come from liberality in the Lord's cause in proportion to their ability and love.

Urging this matter he gave them a parable, saying, "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." And this reminds us of the proverb, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is proper, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." (Prov. 11:24, 25.) The evident lesson is that the Lord is pleased to see his people cultivate breadth of heart as well as breadth of mind;—generosity in proportion to their knowledge of him and his generosity.

The Scriptures nowhere declare that cases of absolute privation amongst the Lord's people are proofs that at some time in their past lives when possessed of means they failed to use a portion of it in charity, in the Lord's service; but the inspired words above quoted come very close to giving this lesson. At all events, it is profitable that we lay this testimony to heart and that each child of God henceforth shall be earnestly careful that out of the blessings of the Lord coming to us all from day to day some measure be carefully, prayerfully and lovingly laid aside as seed to be sown in the Lord's service according to the best wisdom and judgment which he will give us. How many have that carefulness for themselves either in using every penny as fast as it comes, or in being so interested in laying by for the outworking of future plans, that they feel they can spare nothing for charity. How many such can afterward see that they made a great mistake, when their accumulations suddenly vanished, either by reason of sickness or accident or bank failure or what not; and how then they have good reason to regret that they sowed no "seed" after the manner described by the Apostle in the sixth verse of our lesson.

Our Lord showed us how he measures our gifts; that he esteems them not according to the amount given, but chiefly according to the spirit which prompts the gift, when he drew attention to the poor widow who cast in two mites into the Lord's treasury. Our Lord declared that from the standpoint of his estimation the poor widow had cast in a larger sum than any of the wealthy who had given merely out of their abundance, and not to such an extent that they felt it. How many of the Lord's people would be more "fat" spiritually to-day, if they would give attention to the exercise of this talent, this opportunity for service, we cannot say; the Lord only knows. But this lesson makes it incumbent upon us to point out a privilege in this direction which is within the reach of the very poorest.

Very seldom is it necessary to caution people against over-much giving: yet in some instances such caution is proper, and in some instances in Scripture giving has been restrained. No one should give to the extent of causing privation to those dependent upon him. Nor should any one give to such an extent as to bring upon him financial bankruptcy and cause losses to others. The apostolic rule for giving we have quoted above. The laying by should be in general, "according as the Lord hath prospered him." The degree of our prosperity should be the measure of our charities. "The spirit of a sound mind" is inculcated by the Scriptures, upon this as upon every subject.

"The Lord loveth a cheerful giver." And gifts in any other spirit than a cheerful one might just as well not be given: they will bring no blessing. The Lord does not appreciate such giving: it has no "sweet odor" in his estimation. The gift, to be appreciated of the Lord, must be a thank-offering, prompted by a realization of a debt of everlasting gratitude, to him from whom cometh every good and every perfect gift. And to such, the Apostle assures us, "God is able to make all things abound." All who give anything in the divine service, time, talent, strength, money or influence—any or all of these—will find themselves proportionately abounding in the different graces; because such are in the right attitude of heart to grow in grace.

But, the Apostle seems to imply further that such will have "sufficiency in all things" as well as be able to "abound in every good work." In thinking of sufficiency in any direction the condition of the mind must be taken into account. Sufficiency may not mean luxury and every comfort, but "all sufficiency" is gained always where there is "godliness with contentment." In proof that he is inculcating no new theory respecting the divine care over those who are seeking to scatter to others a portion of the blessings that come to them, temporal or spiritual, the Apostle quotes from the Psalms.—112:9.

When in the last verse the Apostle speaks of "being enriched in everything," we are not to understand him to mean that the Lord's people will all be enriched financially. The Apostle himself was an example of how the Lord's people do not become wealthy. He is speaking rather of the enrichment of the heart, as he says in another place, speaking of himself and co-laborers in the gospel work: We are "as poor, but making many rich";—rich in hope, rich in faith, rich in love and all the various concomitant graces which these imply.

Our Golden Text reminds us of the grandest example of self-denial in the interest of others on record—the gift by our Lord Jesus of himself for the world. He was rich in the possession of the spiritual nature and its honors and glory, yet for our sakes he became poor, taking the human nature that he might redeem us; and to this end he surrendered even life itself at Calvary, that through his sacrifice we might become rich;—become possessed of divine favor, and the riches of divine grace in Christ; even joint-heirship with him who is now our exalted Lord at the right hand of divine Majesty. But to attain this joint-heirship with him, we must study to be like him, to have his spirit; and like him desirous of sharing whatever he may give us of either temporal or spiritual favors with others, particularly the "household of faith";—either to feed or clothe it, spiritually or temporally, as circumstances may dictate. "The liberal soul shall be made fat."—Z. '97:260-263.

Joseph's Last Days

Gen. 50:14-26.

Golden Text—"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."—Prov. 4:18.

THE evening of Joseph's life reveals to us a true nobility of character, which had stood the test of many a fiery ordeal, and displayed many of the blessed fruits of righteousness. The close of his life was like the sinking of the sun to rest after the shining of an eventful day. He had been a faithful servant, a loyal friend, a merciful and sympathetic brother, a dutiful and loving son, and finally, a modest and moderate prince.

To Joseph, as to most of the patriarchs, the severest trials and discipline came in early and middle life, and were rewarded with a serene old age; while to many others, such as the Apostle enumerates in Heb. 11, the last days were tragic, and they filled the martyr's grave. The Lord's discipline and testing of his children in the furnace of affliction are regarded by many as evidences of his disfavor, while their temporal prosperity is regarded as a sure sign of his favor. But this is a great mistake; for experiences of both kinds are parts of the trial and testing. We are tested on one side of our nature by the storms of adversity, and on the other by the calms of temporal prosperity ;and blessed is the man who neither faints

D. F. Beard

Old Corn Gems

No. 121

"And they did eat of the OLD CORN of the land on the morrow after the Passover . . . and the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the OLD CORN of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." Joshua 5:11-12.

A SAFE RULE

"WHERE A BROTHER GIVES AN INTERPRETATION OF A SCRIPTURE WHICH DIFFERS FROM THAT GIVEN BY BROTHER RUSSELL, AND BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION SEEMS REASONABLE AND IN HARMONY WITH THE PLAN OF GOD, THEN WE BELIEVE IT A SAFE RULE TO FOLLOW BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION, FOR THE REASON THAT HE IS THE SERVANT OF THE CHURCH, SO CONSTITUTED BY THE LORD FOR THE LAODICEAN PERIOD; AND THEREFORE WE SHOULD EXPECT THE LORD TO TEACH US THROUGH HIM. WHERE THERE ARISES A DOUBT IN THE MIND AS TO WHICH INTERPRETATION IS CORRECT, THEN IT IS ALWAYS SAFER TO RESOLVE THAT DOUBT IN FAVOR OF BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION. WE BELIEVE SUCH TO BE IN HARMONY WITH THE LORD'S WILL."—Z. '18:51.

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The Spirit of Courage

Bro Russell

"For God hath not given us a spirit of timidity; but of courage, of love and of a sound mind."—2 Tim. 1: 7.

THERE is one kind of fearlessness which is begotten of self-esteem, lack of humility. This is not the kind enjoined upon the Lord's people. They are to be both tender-hearted and humble-minded. The spirit of courage possessed by the saints is based largely upon their faith in the Lord. Realizing the divine love and providential care, these can apply to themselves the gracious assurance that "The Father himself loveth you" and that "All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to the called ones according to his purpose." It is this realization of divine all-wisdom and all-power that gives the strength of heart referred to in our text. It will be readily seen, then, that this courage is based upon faith, though of course the faith must have a foundation of knowledge. The proper relationship of our growth is primarily knowledge: faith, courage, activity, and all of these continue to grow, and in their maturity make us wise, faithful, courageous overcomers in respect to the spiritual matters to which we have been called.

Sometimes we realize our deficiencies and are not able to locate the cause. Some one says, I want to be an overcomer, to gain the victory over the spirit of the world, over the tendencies of my own fallen flesh and over the wiles of the Adversary, but somehow I cannot; I fail. Such should learn to look for the source of failure, the deficient element, and should fortify himself in respect to the same. Let him ask first, Is my failure to overcome due to a lack of courage? Am I fearful, and hence unable, to fight the good fight of faith and, by the Lord's assistance, to gain the victory? If he has the courage he may find that he has not been sufficiently trusting the Lord, but leaning too much on his own strength. Such should remember the Apostle's words, "When I am weak, then am I strong"; reversely, "when I am strong in self-assurance, I am then weak," because the Lord wishes me to rely not upon myself, but upon him, his strength, his grace. If the courage be found deficient the reason evidently is that the faith is lacking, and if so, there is a reason for it: either a lack of knowledge on which to build faith, or a lack of exercise and development of faith. The knowledge is to be sought from the right quarter, in harmony with the Lord and his Word, and the faith is to be exercised, continually recognizing the Lord's interest in us as his children, as testified to by his Word and by noticing the leadings of divine providence in our daily affairs.

Love Casts Out Fear

There is a proper fear or reverence and disinclination to offend our heavenly Father and our Redeemer, which we wish never to lose. Perfect love will not cast out this fear, but rather intensify it. The fear which love casts out is timidity, a servile fear or dread of the Lord or of Satan, or the fallen angels, or of men and what they might do unto us. Perfect love cannot be attained without knowledge, faith, courage and overcoming. It is the result of the exercise of all this divine arrangement that brings us nearer to God and makes us truly thankful and appreciative of his gracious purposes and omnipotent power for their accomplishment.

The spirit of courage needs special cultivation by the Lord's people. And this cultivation means growth in all the graces. For instance, if calamity befall us or threaten us we should immediately think of the fact that our Lord assures us that an insignificant sparrow cannot fall to the ground without the Father's notice and that we are of much more value than many sparrows. This thought at once strengthens the heart, nerves the arm, quickens the pulse of endeavor, provided we can realize that God is for us, that no earthborn cloud intervenes between our souls and the love for us which he has declared. If a cloud does obscure the Father's love we must the more earnestly, the more persistently get from behind it by getting our hearts right with the Lord, by going to him in prayer, by confessing our trespasses and by requesting mercy and grace to help and to restore us to his favor.

"Be of good courage and he shall strengthen thine heart," is one of the blessings assured us in his Word. In the divine order courage is necessary in order to strength and victory. Some one has said, "One with God is the majority." With the courage to grasp this thought and to hold it things almost superhuman seem possible to the Lord's people, while without this courage they may naturally be weak and easily vanquished.

Courage in the Evil Day

Never before, perhaps, was courage so needed as it will be needed in the evil day just before us; but the Prophets' descriptions of the great trouble time before us are very figurative when they speak of fire and clouds and pillars of smoke, saying of this time, "I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke," etc. But the consecrated children of God need have no timidity in respect to these matters if they have the proper courage, developed by proper exercise and built upon proper faith, founded upon the knowledge of divine revelation. His attitude of heart will be, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Whether, therefore, storms financial, political, religious or demoniacal, come his way, the child of God may rest secure and be of good courage. The Lord is both able and willing to care for his interests and bring him off victor. Should the fallen angels be permitted to again materialize and personate either the dead or the living, this class need have no fear. Their perfect love for the Lord, based upon a knowledge and appreciation of his

Truth, will lead them to triumph courageously over all the wiles of the Adversary and his hordes.

The Elect to Be Undeceivable

Bro Trowell

The Scriptures abound with testimonies to the effect that the severe trials of the near future will be along the lines of deception. They speak of lying angels and deceivableness of unrighteousness misleading and "lying wonders" and tell us that the Lord will send or permit a strong delusion that they may believe a lie. If we gain the right conception of the matter these deceptions are to affect the whole world, including its wise men, and indeed practically everybody except the "very elect"; and the "very elect" will be preserved, not through their own wisdom or superiority, but through the power of God. "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."—Matt. 24:24.

Our Lord in the parable of the wheat and tares tells how in the present time he would gather "together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matt. 24:24.) It is by thus gathering them that they will be protected in the time of strife and trouble when others will be deceived. . . . Their minds, their hearts, their affections are to be gathered together, centered. Our text tells us that our Lord is this great Center to which his Elect must all be gathered if they would have rest or peace, if they would overcome the world, the flesh and the peculiar snares of the Adversary, which will now be laid for the feet of all and will more or less entrap all except the Elect class. Sermon chart.

"Gather My Saints Unto Me"

Figuratively all of these "very elect" ones are gathered, and the place is thus described. "I will say to the Lord, he is my refuge; in him will I trust"; and again, "He that dwelleth in the secret 3 place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psa. 91:1.) Ah! no wonder that we also read, "No harm shall come nigh them." How could harm come to any who are thus close to the Lord? A thousand shall fall at thy side; ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee; because thou hast made the Lord thy refuge; thou hast made the Most High thy habitation."—Psa. 91:7.

This nearness to God, into which his "very elect" will be gathered, will be the source of their protection. And the dangers to others will be 4 in proportion to their distance to this great citadel of strength, this fortress, this refuge or tower.

"Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry; Jan 17 morning
We're trav'ling through Immanuel's ground,
To fairer prospects nigh."

"All Power Is Given Unto Me"

These were our Lord's words after his resurrection. They were true then. They have been 5 true throughout this age and they are still more completely true today, because we are now living in the time of which it is written, "He shall take 1875 unto himself his great power and reign." His reign has in some senses of the word already begun. 1914 He has already marshalled forces, which will complete the overthrow of everything opposed to his Kingdom and its righteous laws. And we may be sure that the members of his Body still in the flesh this side of the veil are no less subjects of his providential care than is the world and its affairs. We may be sure that nothing is transpiring, either in the nominal Church or amongst the kingdoms of the world; amongst socialistic or political parties or in the financial world contrary to what will best serve our Lord's purposes in connection with the events just before us and the outworking of the same in fullest accord with the prophecies.

Oh, that we could get this thought rightly settled in our minds! Yea, as the Scriptures say, "Settle it in your hearts"—that our Lord is at the helm superintending all of earth's affairs at the present time in a much more practical sense than ever in the past. And have we not seen his graciousness towards the Church in the past? And can we doubt his continued supervision of the affairs of his people to the grand consummation? "He who hath begun the good work in us is able to complete it," and he who has thus far conducted the work is able still to direct it, order, bless it and use it to his own praise and to the blessing of his people.

"Who led thee first will lead thee still;
Be calm and sink into his will."

Let us not be timid either as respects the affairs 7 of the work in general, or as respects our own personal relationship to it and to the Lord. Let us learn more and more to be on the lookout for the leadings of his providence and utilizing knowledge which he has given us from his Word. Let us not be surprised concerning the fiery trials which may try us and the stormy billows which may at times seem about to overwhelm us. "For greater is he that is on our part than all that are against us"—however numerous, however strong, and whether demons or men. Let us remember that we are called to be overcomers and that the victory that overcometh the world is our faith.

"Resist the devil and he will flee from you" is the Lord's testimony. This implies an assault by the Adversary. It implies that he should be resisted and can be resisted and that in the end he will flee from us, not because of arrogance or power on our part, but, as our Master said, "He hath nothing in me"; so if he finds it useless to continue his assaults he will probably flee also from us to other fields of service. . . .

In conclusion, then, dear friends, be of good year text courage, of strong faith, of heroic determination, and see that your faith is not in yourself, nor in your 9 vows, nor in your very best endeavors, but in the Lord. Trust in the Lord and the practise of your faith to control your thoughts and words and deeds, and to bring you closer to our Father and Redeemer. (We live in a time when worldly wisdom is taking hold of this need of courage and is advising people that it should be based upon self-confidence, self-assurance, self-esteem.) This is the world's counterfeit, the Adversary's counterfeit of the true courage which the Word of God inculcates and through which we may not only rejoice in all of the present experiences of life, but ultimately "come off conquerors; yea, more than conquerors through him that loved us."—Z. '09:122-124.

Rewards of Obedience

Prov. 3:1-17.

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."—Prov. 3: 6.

In this lesson Wisdom personified stands as an instructor and offers good counsel to such as have an ear to hear and a desire to obey her.

(1) "Wisdom is justified of her children." They show their parentage, and reflect their mother's likeness. But to this end Wisdom's laws and commandments must be carefully heeded. Wisdom's laws are divine laws, expressed not only in the Scriptures, but also in the laws of nature. "The children of the light" should walk in the light in reference to physical as well as spiritual matters—health, food, cleanliness, clothing, etc.

(2) No one of ordinary perception can fail to note that a wise and moderate course in life in obedience to the divine laws is beneficial with respect to the life which now is, and also that which is to come. True, many in the prime of life and health do not give heed to Wisdom's voice; true, many who do give heed are such as are already greatly impaired, having either inherited weaknesses and frailties from the un-wisdom of their parents (beginning with Adam and Eve) or having neglected the voice of Wisdom until retribution overtook them. But even for the impaired the counsel of Wisdom is profitable, as many have proved, and brings with it more of peace than can be found in any other way.

(3) How grand the counsel of this verse! How wise, and how necessary to a large development of heart, are the graces here mentioned—mercy and truth! No one is truly great who is mean, spiteful, vindictive. Mercy towards others, implying consideration for their failings and sufferings, is an ennobling grace, a part of the image of God, too largely lost by many. Truth here stands for sincerity, pureness and uprightness of dealing in all our affairs. Who could be a true nobleman without this quality? Much more is it necessary to every true Christian.

"Bind them about thy neck" signifies that these are to be esteemed as jewels and ornaments of character carefully guarded from loss and always in sight,—delightsome things. And not only should they be manifest to all as outward graces, but they should be written or engraven in our hearts. Nobility of character, Godlikeness, was a part of man's original endowment, and was written in his very heart, nature, constitution; but Adamic sin and its resultant separation from God, and now six thousand years of degradation, have well nigh obliterated this original divine law from the heart of humanity. So to fallen man in general, the evil and selfish and resentful suggestions present themselves, instead of mercy and sincerity. But the child of God, the child of Wisdom, is to retrace and engrave again upon the tablets of the heart (that is, in his very character) these graces so generally obliterated. This work is at the present time being followed only by those who are in the school of Christ. But by and by the school of Christ will be enlarged; and these who are now pupils will be associated with the great Master as teachers and instructors of the Word; and then the whole world will be called upon to rewrite in their hearts the original law of righteousness. And all who appreciate the opportunity will be assisted in so doing by the Lord and his servants; as it is written.—Jer. 31:33, 34.

(4) Such characters are sure to be pleasing in the sight of God, and are acknowledged even by such persons as are children of darkness and hate the light, and would say all manner of evil falsely against the children of the light.

(5) Every matured child of God must learn well and appreciate the sentiment of this verse. Experience has taught him the imperfection of his own judgment in many things, and the fallibility of all human counsel; and he has learned and is still learning to trust the Lord implicitly. In order thus to trust the Lord, a knowledge of his Word and the plan of salvation which it reveals are very important; they inspire trust and confidence, not only in the ability and wisdom of God, but also in his justice and love.

(6) It is not only proper that God's children should trust him in their hearts, but also that they should confess and acknowledge him as their Lord and Master in all of their affairs. Such as are careful thus to acknowledge the Lord have the assurance that he will direct their paths. Their paths will not be directed in ways most congenial to the fallen nature; nor do they wish for this; for, as already seen, they are desiring and seeking mercy and truth, as outward charms, and also as deeply graven inward principles.

(7) Nothing is more dangerous to the child of God than self-conceit: it blocks the way to true progress and reformation of heart, and hinders true usefulness to others, and especially usefulness in God's service; for his Word declares, "God resisteth the proud, but showeth his favor unto the humble."

Instead of self confidence, Wisdom dictates a distrustfulness of self, remembering its weaknesses and imperfections, and correspondingly the greater reverence for God and reliance upon him, which more than anything else will strengthen and enable us to depart from the evil of our fallen estate.

(8) "Health [or vigor] to thy muscles and marrow to thy bones," as a figurative expression, would seem to signify general vitality, vigor of mind and body, which certainly are among the blessed results of that proper reverence for the Lord which leads us to depart from sin in thought, word and deed.

(9) Whatever we possess should be made to contribute its part in God's service. Whether our substance consists of a rich endowment of talent, or education, or influence, its first fruits, its results, should go to the service of our gracious heavenly

Father, as our Lord said: "Seek ye first [chiefly, to serve] the Kingdom of heaven."

(10) Whatever our substance, if faithful in its use and in consecrating its best to the cause of God, a blessing will result to us. During the Jewish age God's covenant with that people was to the effect that faithfulness to him and his laws would bring them temporal prosperity; and the same rule will be in force during the Millennial age; as it is written, "In his days [the Millennial age] shall the righteous flourish," but "evil doers shall be cut off." (Psa. 72:7; 37:9.) This rule does not apply during the Gospel age, however: the meek do not now inherit the earth, nor the righteous in general. Now the proud are prosperous, "Yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." (Mal. 3:15.) Not only our Lord Jesus and the apostles, who honored God with the first-fruits of their being, but also many of the household of faith since, have not had overflowing barns and wine presses. Chiefly they have been "the poor of this world, rich in faith"; yet, nevertheless, they have had the finest of the wheat, the purest of the oil and the best of the wine, as represented in their spiritual nourishment and enrichment.

(11, 12) The trials and difficulties of this present life are not to be esteemed as marks of divine disfavor, if we have become children of God, children of Wisdom. We are to remember the promise of our Father, that "All things work together for good to them that love God, to the called ones according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28.) Reproofs, trials, disciplines should be reminders to us that we are not perfect, that we still have need of the mercy of God in Christ, even with our best efforts; and should lead us to greater diligence in "perfecting holiness in the fear [reverence] of the Lord." —2 Cor. 7:1.

(13-17) Wisdom and understanding are not exactly synonymous terms. Wisdom describes more particularly the perception of right and wrong principles and their results and the propriety of following these. Knowledge or understanding relates more particularly to the information and building up of judgment and character, as the result of obedience to the voice of Wisdom.

It is a great blessing and privilege indeed to find Wisdom, for few there be that find her in this present time. Wisdom is the light which cometh from above. She is the truth. Her grand exemplification among men was "the man Christ Jesus," our Lord, "the true Light." Light from above. Wisdom, is still in the world, as represented in the divine Word; but to the majority it is unseen, unknown; as it is written, "The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not." Thank God for the assurance that in due time all the blind eyes shall be opened, and that then the true light, the true wisdom from above, shall lighten every man! Then all will see the truth, and all will hear the voice of Wisdom, the voice of God, the voice of Christ, the voice of the Church, and be privileged to drink at the fountain of Wisdom and knowledge, and, if they will be obedient, to obtain the full measure of divine favor and blessing as represented in the offer of everlasting life. —See Rev. 22:17.

But, alas! although but few find Wisdom now, still fewer heed her voice and purchase the true knowledge and its precious blessings as she directs. Nothing else that can be bought is so valuable. Under Wisdom's direction now not only the silver of truth may be obtained, but the . . . graces of character, as symbolized in precious stones. These may now be secured by obedience to her voice—and more; for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man the things that God has in reservation for them that love him,"—including everlasting life, heavenly riches, honor, joy and peace.—Z. '96: 262-264.

"Keep Yourselves in the Love of God"

Jude 21.

We cannot keep ourselves in this love unless we have gotten into it. And that all men do not possess it, or are not in this condition of heart, is not only manifested to our senses through the experiences of life, but testified to by our Lord Jesus, who said to some of the holiness people of his day, "I know that ye have not the love of God in you."—John 5:42.

We are to distinguish then between natural love and the love of God. All mankind has some share at least of natural love—self-love, love for family, love of friends. Our Lord, speaking of this kind of love, implies that it is not the love of God, saying, "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also do even the same." (Luke 6:32.) The love of God, therefore, is a different kind of love to that which is common to the natural man, and we need to be directed into it, and to grow or develop in it, as the Apostle testifies, saying, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." (2 Thess. 3:5.) We are directed into this love through the divine Word which brings to our attention the peculiarity of God's love as distinguished from that of the natural fallen man. While love in the natural man is more or less selfish, even in our very best exercise of it, on behalf of friends, God commendeth his love toward us as being of a superior kind, in that while we were yet sinners, aliens, strangers, enemies through wicked works, under his gracious, loving plan Christ died for us. This kind of unmerited, sacrificing love is wholly different from anything that is known to fallen humanity. As our Lord Jesus said, the greatest love amongst men would be that a man should lay down his life for his **friends**, but to lay down his life for his enemies is certainly a much higher type of love,—unselfish, gracious, heavenly.—John 15:13; Rom. 5:7.

The first blessing that comes to us, as the eyes of our understanding open and we come to some knowledge of the divine character and love, is that we perceive or discern or come to realize this higher type of love—the love of God. As the Apostle says, "Hereby **perceive** we the the love of God, because he [Christ] laid down his life for us." "Herein was **manifested** the love of God toward us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him."—1 John 3:16; 4:9.

It is after we have thus perceived the love of God that it begins to operate upon us, if we are in a favorable condition—if our hearts are good ground, prepared under divine providence for this knowledge. Of such the Apostle says, "The love of Christ constraineth us"—draws us, awakens a reciprocating love in our hearts, so that in turn we love God. (Not that we first loved God, but that his love attracted and developed ours.) (1 John 4:19.) The effect of this love upon the good-ground heart is that very shortly it decides that it could do nothing less than love similarly in return, and thus be willing to lay down life itself in God's service. It esteems that this would be but a reasonable service, a reasonable recompense for divine favors.

The Apostle Paul sums up this transformation from selfishness to the love of God in a few words, saying, "We ourselves also were at one time foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers desires and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another; but when the goodness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared he saved us [delivered us from this evil condition of heart], not on account of works of righteousness which we had done, but according to his own mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the holy spirit, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior."—Titus 3:3-6.—See **Diaglott.**

This newness of spirit, this new mind, this mind in accord with the love of God, the Apostle assures us is not received except by those who receive the holy spirit. Those who merely take the step of justification may to some extent experience a reformation of life, so that instead of living an openly evil course they will seek to live at least moral lives. But none can expect to receive the holy spirit of love, and thus to become possessed of "the love of God," a self-sacrificing love, unless he takes the step of consecration to the Lord, which brings him into the condition in which he may indeed have the holy spirit, the spirit of divine love, shed abroad in his heart. Let none then hope to obtain the love of God in any other way than the way which God has provided. Undoubtedly in the Millennial age it will be made possible for the natural man to come into "the love of God" through a process of restitution; as he shall more and more attain to the perfection of human nature in that time he may to that extent more and more become possessed of the love of God until, when finally perfected, he may possess this love of God in full measure,—because humanity, in its perfect condition, is a fleshly image of the invisible God. But now, while we still have these mortal bodies that are imperfect, and while restitution has not commenced, there is only the one way of attaining the love of God—by obedience to the call to present our bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, through Jesus our Lord.

The new mind is to grow and to be more and more filled with the holy spirit—more and more filled with the love of God; hence we may expect that there will be differences of attainment in this matter, and we should know what to look for as evidences of our growth in grace and of our attainment of this love of God. The Apostle John declares, "This is [proof of our possession of] the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and **do not find them grievous.**" (1 John 5:3.) He who keeps the Lord's commandments, but who finds them grievous, has thus an evidence that he is not in heart-harmony with them, that he has not made a full consecration of himself to the Lord—the obedience of such an one would be no proof whatever of the possession of "the love of God." But whoever of the Lord's people is so in harmony with him that they delight to do his will, have in this an evidence that the love of God is dwelling in them richly and abounding. This is the same thought which the Apostle again expresses, saying, "Whosoever keepeth his word [loves the word of God, and takes pleasure not in turning, twisting and endeavoring to avoid the force of that Word, but who keepeth or cherisheth it, loveth it, and seeketh to conform thereto] in him verily is the love of God perfected."—1 John 2:5.

This reminds us of our dear Redeemer, in whom verily the love of the Father was perfected, and who is represented by the Prophet as saying, "I delight to do thy will, O God: yea, thy law is within my heart." (Psalm 40:8.) And our Lord marked out the same spirit, as being essential to those who would be his disciples, saying, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." (John 15:10.) There is no suggestion in any of these or in other Scriptures that mere outward formalistic obedience and piety count anything with the Lord. The Lord "seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth"—such as have the spirit of righteousness, love for righteousness, love for truth, love for all the qualities of the divine character, and a desire to conform thereto in thought, word and deed.

Nor are we to make the mistake that some have made, of supposing that the commandments referred to by our Lord are the Ten Commandments upon which hung the covenant which God made with the Jews. We are not Jews, and hence have nothing whatever to do with their covenant, given through Moses, its mediator, at Sinai, nor with the Law upon which it was based. We are Christians, and have to do with a better covenant, sealed with the precious blood of Christ, and based upon a still higher law than the Decalogue—a law which instead of saying, "Thou shalt not" do this, "Thou shalt not" do that, is positive, and declares what we shall do, saying, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy being, with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This is a higher law, of which our Law-giver, Jesus, said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love," and of which the Apostle said, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." The Apostle John says, "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God; he that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love."—1 John 4:8, 16.

Altho the first evidence of the possession of "the love of God" is a love for God, nevertheless the Scriptures distinctly point out to us that an additional requirement is specified, viz., love for the brethren—for those who have the spirit of God, especially, but in a general way at least a sympathetic love for all mankind. Thus the Apostle says, "If we love one another, [it is an evidence that] God dwelleth in us, and [that] his love is perfected in us." (1 John 4:12.) The same Apostle emphasizes this same point, saying, "Whosoever hath this world's goods [interests, affairs], and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John 3:17.) The intimation is that such a lack of love and sympathy, and such a restraint of assistance from a brother in need, would imply that the love of God either did not at all dwell in such an one, or that it was but slightly developed—far from being perfected.

Nor does this love merely exercise itself toward the brethren in the matters of temporal necessities; rather, it affects all the affairs of life, leading the one who enjoys it to "walk in love," "forbearing one another in love." (Eph. 5:2; 4:2.) And even were it necessary to speak an unpalatable truth, the spirit of the Lord, "the love of God," will dictate the speaking of the truth in love, which the Apostle assures us is essential to our growth in Christ—Eph. 4:15.

Knowledge is valuable, but only incidentally; of itself the Apostle assures us knowledge would be inclined to puff us up, make us vain and boastful, and thus quite out of harmony with the spirit of God, the spirit of love, meekness, gentleness. Knowledge might make us merely tinkling cymbals giving out a sound, but possessing no real merit in the Lord's sight. But knowledge, when it serves its proper purpose, brings us to the appreciation of "the love [that is] of God" and to a realization of the wisdom of copying his character, that we should seek so far as possible to be like our Father which is in heaven, copies of his dear Son, our Lord. The Apostle brings this position clearly to our attention when he says, "That ye being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know [appreciate] the love of Christ . . . and be filled with all the fulness of God.—Eph. 3:17-19.

Undoubtedly love is the principal thing to be studied, to be appreciated, to be copied and practiced in our lives. We trust that all of our readers have already become partakers of this "love of God," and that all such are seeking to have it perfected in them, and to be rooted and grounded in it. We have the Apostle's assurance that only those who take this standpoint can make permanent and thorough progress in grace and knowledge. Those who have entered the school of Christ, and who refuse to progress in it toward perfection, may assuredly expect that sooner or later their knowledge of the divine plan will slip from them; while those who do make progress in this proper direction may expect that the lengths and breadths of the divine plan will continue opening before them, and that their growth in knowledge will keep pace with their growth in love.

Finally, in harmony with our text, let us remember that this is not a matter that God attends to, but a matter which requires our own attention. God has made all the provisions whereby we may know of his love, and may be constrained by it, and may be accepted into it, but it devolves upon us to keep ourselves in the love of God: and we can only thus keep ourselves in his love by seeking to practice in the daily affairs of life the principles of his love: permitting the love of God to constrain us daily to sacrifice ourselves in the Lord's service, . . . permitting the love of the brethren to so fill our hearts that, as the Apostle expresses it, we may be glad to "lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16); permitting a sympathetic love for mankind in general, the "groaning creation," in all of its trials and difficulties, to exercise our hearts so that we shall more and more feel kindly and generously toward all with whom we have contact and to make us helpful to them as we have opportunity; permitting this love even to extend to the brute creation under our care, so that we will not be negligent of their interests; all this seems essential to our keeping ourselves in this love of God. Let us more and more practice, and thus become more and more perfected in this love, which is the spirit of our Father, the spirit of our Lord, and the spirit of all who are truly members of the body [or family] of Christ.—Z. '00:182-184.

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"Let us work out our own salvation with fear and trembling" as we recognize how great and blessed are the things in reservation for us if we are faithful, and yet how we may miss this wonderful opportunity of glory and honor. Whatever is of sufficient value for us to greatly desire, is worthy of great care in respect to our attitude toward it. While the fear in this case may not indicate a literal trembling, yet it implies alarm lest we, having had the courage to undertake to run the race for the prize, should allow anything to impede our progress or, possibly, lead us to abandon the race. This course would effect our ruin. Recognizing the great prize, we should fear and tremble lest we should let it slip from us and so lose it.—Z. '11:108.

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Jesus became the great High Priest by the offering up of Himself. And having become the great High Priest over the House of God, He is the Advocate of all those who come into harmony with the Father. He is their surety.—Z. '15:293, 294.

Trespasses and Sins and Their Effect on Character

"All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."—1 John 5:17.

WE should recognize a distinction between **trespasses** and **sins**. A **sin** is that which is more or less wilfully and intentionally committed. A **trespass** is a sin in a certain sense, but one committed without intention. The fact that a sin is called a trespass would imply that it was not done wilfully. The Divine Law stands whether we are able to keep it or not; and every violation of the Divine Law is a sin in one sense. But those violations of God's Law which are wholly the result of our unavoidable weaknesses are not culpable sins, and hence not in the same category with sins more or less wilful.

So far as the world is concerned, it is already under condemnation for sin. Those who have accepted Christ and have received the forgiveness of their sins through Him, are spoken of by the Apostle Paul as those whose sins "are past, through the forbearance of God." (Romans 3:25.) Because of their consecration of their lives to be the followers of Christ these sins are forever gone, so far as responsibility for their transgressions is concerned. From this time on the Lord's people are counted no more as sinners, but as saints whose whole lives have been devoted to righteousness.

Nevertheless, we have this treasure in earthen vessels, our mortal bodies. The New Mind in Christ does not expect to **practice** sin any more; for if he should sin wilfully, this would mean his entire repudiation of the Covenant into which he has entered with the Lord. But notwithstanding this, he will commit trespasses; for he has merely the good intentions of the heart, with only an imperfect body in which to operate. The Apostles recognized this fact. St. Paul declared that in his flesh dwelt no perfection. St. John says that whosoever says that he has no sin deceives himself, and the Truth is not in him. (1 John 1:8-10.) This same Apostle, in the same Epistle, declares that whoever sins is of the Devil. In this last text he evidently refers to the practice of sin, to wilful sin, not to unavoidable trespasses; for he has just said that all commit these unintentional violations of God's Law. St. James says that in many things we all offend. (James 3:2.) To **will** is present with every consecrated child of God; but how to **perform** is the problem.

Our Attitude Because of Trespasses

According to the Scriptures, it is sinful for the Lord's people to injure one another in word, act or thought. But many do not realize this high standard, even after they have come into the family of God. They may not learn until months, or even years afterward, the full measure of the Divine Law respecting every affair in life. Therefore there are many who for a time are guilty of evil-speaking and evil-thinking, but who are unconscious of having done wrong. These transgressions of the Divine Law are **trespasses**. This should be our attitude toward God: "Gracious Heavenly Father, we cannot do perfectly. We pray Thee, forgive our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. We come with courage to Thy Throne of Heavenly Grace, asking for the covering of the merit of our Savior for these trespasses, and for grace to overcome as far as possible and to become holy in thought, in word, in deed."

But if any man **sin**, it is a different matter. In proportion as he **wilfully** violates the Divine Law, in that proportion he shall suffer stripes. Sins leave their mark on the character; for they are to some extent at least intentional violations of the principles of righteousness and of the Covenant with God by which every real Christian obligates himself to obey the Divine injunction. The Scriptures clearly indicate that if one of these deliberately sins, he commits the sin unto death, for which no penalty will be sufficient except the extinction of the Second Death.

Trespasses Not Necessarily a Hindrance

The text, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous," evidently refers to trespasses and not to deliberate, or wilful sins; for, as we have already noted, the same Apostle writes, "He that sinneth is of the Devil"; "that which is begotten of God sinneth not." Anyone begotten of God, possessed of the Holy Spirit, could not, so long as he is in possession of this Holy Spirit, commit a sin with full intention. Except under the influence of strong temptation of the flesh, he could not sin knowingly; for if he **were** to commit such a sin, he would be manifesting that he had lost the Holy Spirit entirely. So long as the Holy Spirit abides in him he could not wilfully, intelligently, commit sin. He might be overcome by the weaknesses of the flesh, and thus might give a **measure** of consent to the wrong; but this would be only a partial sin. Yet for that portion which would involve the consent of his mind he would receive **stripes**, in proportion to the degree of wilfulness connected with the matter.

Our unintentional trespasses, properly striven against, evidently do not interfere with the development of character. The implication of the Scriptures is that the new mind which is properly growing is striving against all kinds of sin and imperfection and is waging a good warfare. In the case of trespasses which are unavoidable on his part, instead of doing him an injury, these serve to show him what points in his character are weak and need to be strengthened. He learns of his weaknesses only by more or less falling into trespasses unintentionally, unwillingly. As he finds weaknesses in his character-development, it becomes his pleasure and earnest effort to fortify himself along these lines, that he may become "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."—Ephesians 6:10.

The Sin Against the Holy Spirit

Our Lord declared that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men except the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. His thought here, we believe, is that because men are more or less imperfect in their judgment, on that account the Lord would be willing to forgive all such blemishes and trespasses; for they are unintentional. Hence there would be Divine forgiveness for some of the great trespasses and transgressions which they have committed. The crucifixion of our Lord was not really intentional. Speaking of those who crucified Christ the Apostle Peter says, "I wot, brethren, that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." St. Paul expresses the same thought, saying, "For had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory."—Acts 3:17; 1 Corinthians 2:8.

These statements imply that this act was more or less of a trespass on the part of the perpetrators. There was a measure of sin, a measure of knowledge. In proportion as they had knowledge they had responsibility, and proportionately received stripes, nationally and individually. Therefore the Scriptures tell us that there will be future opportunities of blessing to those who crucified the Prince of Life. Their eyes will be opened when they awake. We are glad of this. They did not sin with full knowledge and wilfulness, and are not, therefore, subjects of the Second Death. They will have a future trial. But we understand they will come up merely as members of the race of Adam. They will have no special favor as Jews, and may require, indeed, many stripes. Some may never be recovered.

What is it to sin against the Holy Spirit? We reply that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Truth, of righteousness. Whoever recognizes the Spirit of the Truth, the Lord's Spirit, and intentionally does violence to it and to the messengers of that Truth, because they are its messengers, is sinning against the Holy Spirit; and to whatever extent one does this he is a wilful sinner. If his act be committed with full knowledge, full light, there would never be forgiveness for the sin, either in this life or in the life to come. And the end of that sin against full light and understanding would be the Second Death. While every intentional sin against the Holy Spirit, against the Truth, must have a punishment, whether in this Age or in the incoming Age, yet the punishment will not be the Second Death unless the knowledge, the sin, be a full, complete one.—Z. '15:251, 252.

"Consider Him"

"Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."—Hebrews 12:3.

[On Wednesday evening, October 11th, 1916, at the Brooklyn Tabernacle, after the Church Activities Committee had read the various reports of the work done during the past quarter, Brother Russell gave a short address to the New York City Congregation, which proved to be his last words to the Church in the midst of which he lived and labored. Those words were taken down at the time, and are here transcribed for the benefit of the friends.]

THERE is a natural tendency amongst people to tire of a thing when the novelty wears off. Even the hearing of the Truth, strange as it may seem, causes weariness to some after a time. It is the same way with the soldier. It is easy for him to enlist and march forward when the drums are beating and the bands are playing, and enthusiasm runs high; but when the damp, cold weather comes, when ice forms in the trenches and there is no martial music, he is liable to grow weary; and army life does not seem to be nearly so attractive as it appeared at the first. This is true in our spiritual warfare—in fighting the good fight of faith. There are times when all around seems joyous, when the Christian soldiers are marching, and all are stimulated and encouraged whereas there are times when the clouds hang low and are dark, chilliness surrounds us, ardor is abated, and we are liable to get discouraged. It is partly for this reason that the Lord has directed us to "Consider Him," that thereby we might be stimulated and encouraged to press on and to inspire others. He knew just what we would need.

"Lest Ye Be Wearied and Faint in Your Minds"

The Apostle Paul exhorts us not to forget the assembling of ourselves together, and so much the more as we see the day approaching. Why so? Because "the day" will have its peculiar trials, its difficulties, its attractions in various directions; and the story of the Cross will likely seem old—not as new as some things; and consequently we shall need to bear each other up. Because there is danger of becoming lukewarm spiritually, it is generally recommended that the Lord's people meet together; for to do so is stimulating. In proportion as we seek to stir up others in the way by putting them in remembrance we are thereby reviving our own minds. We can, therefore, see a wisdom in all of God's arrangements with respect to the Truth.

I believe that in every congregation there is danger of growing weary in well-doing. Well-doing costs something. It means sacrificing. If you are serving the Lord's cause, you are denying yourself in some way. Unless we have some special love for the Lord and for the Truth, we might say, "This is a very tedious work, I am pressed in many other directions, and there are those who are inviting me to see them." So many things come to you, and to us all, that we might consequently be retarded and slacken our efforts. The world, the flesh and the Adversary are pressing hard to draw us, not exactly from the Prize, but from the narrow way that leads to the Prize. They would slacken our zeal and beat our courage down; they would make us faint and cause us to say, "Oh, I am so tired; I cannot do any more!" Doubtless we all have had such experiences. If we get faint in body, we can rest ourselves; but if we get faint in mind, it is more difficult to become refreshed.

What Shall We Consider About Him?

What, then, shall we do, in case we get weary and faint in our minds? The Apostle tells us: "Consider Him!" Whom? We all know that he is referring to our Lord Jesus, the one great "Him" in all the whole world. What shall we consider about Him? His birth? Yes, that is profitable: but it is not what the Apostle here suggests. His glory and honor? Not that exactly; but rather, how much **He endured without getting faint or weary,** without giving up the work which He undertook to do. He undertook to do a certain work, and so have we! In some respects we have undertaken the same work that Jesus did. Let us consider Him, lest we get weary and faint in following on in His footsteps!

Of course, the world is not exhorted in this text, but merely those who have come into the Lord's family, and have taken up their cross to follow Him—those who have consecrated themselves to Him, those who have made a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice, declaring that they will give all to Him and His service—that they will follow Him at any cost. These are the ones who are exhorted to consider Him.

But what about Him shall they consider? What He endured without fainting, in carrying out the Father's will. What He endured in the way of contradiction of sinners against Himself. This is the very kind of difficulty which we have in our endeavor to carry out the Father's will. If there were no Devil, no sinners, and no trials, this would be a very pleasant world to go through. It is because we have to swim up-stream, against the current, when almost everything is going in the opposite direction, that we have such a difficult work. Watch the swimmer! He must battle up-stream against the down-flowing current; a moment's relaxation and the current carries him downward. With us there is a natural tendency in ourselves, as well as in the currents of thought and activity about us in the world, to pull us back in the opposite direction from which we are trying to go.

Our Lord's Loyalty and Obedience

Let us consider His example, His words; or else we may become faint. There are many reasons why we might become so. One of them is that we might consider that the opposition against us is too great. Jesus had the opposition of all those of national influence in His day. He was continually misrepresented, until finally the slanders culminated in His being called a profane person, One who had spoken blasphemies against God, who had said that He was like God, and was as great as God. This was a part of the charge against Him. Although the accusation was not true, nevertheless He endured it, even though He had power to stop it. If He could cast out demons and open the eyes of the blind, then surely, He could have done something to change things in His own case. Why, then, did He not do it? Because He was doing the Father's will; and it was the Father's will that He should bear witness to the Truth and demonstrate His loyalty in connection with it.

Is it not the same with us? But why does the Father care about our loyalty? Because He is seeking a certain class for a certain purpose. . . . In our case, He has a great Plan that contemplates the overthrow of sin and the blessing of all the families of the earth; and He is now looking for a class who is in sympathy with all His plans and arrangements. He is seeking for those who would rather suffer death than violate His Word, or shrink from doing His Will.

This is our glorious position, and we are considering One who never made a mistake in carrying out the Father's will. Yet He suffered as though He had made a great many serious mistakes. He suffered as a disloyal person, although He had always been loyal. The Jews declared that He had no patriotism at all, yet He was loyal to His own nation in every respect. As Jesus said, "They hated Me without a cause."

His Temptations Subtle

Turn these things over in your minds! Consider Him! This kind of suffering is necessary; for the Father would not be wise in exalting to a high position any one who was not thoroughly loyal. He could not give even His own Son the Divine nature without a thorough testing. . . .

Jesus was tempted to grow weary and faint in His mind. This was one of the ways through which special temptations from Satan were placed before Him. Satan told our Lord that He would get rid of these difficulties if He would co-operate with him and would avoid those things which would necessarily and surely come to Him if He should continue in the way marked out by Jehovah. Our Lord's answer was, "Get thee behind Me, Satan!" Another temptation was to show the great power which He had received as a spirit-begotten Son, to use this power either to gratify His own natural appetite or to make a display before the people. So it is with those of us who may wish to do things in a showy way instead of in the humble way marked out for us. We may expect to have the same temptations that our Lord had. Therefore we should be on guard that we may prove loyal to the Father. . . .

In the past, false doctrines confused us; but now "we see Jesus"—we see what He accomplished, and how He endured without growing weary or giving up. It makes our course plain when we consider Him. We sometimes say that we have not been careful enough in this or that matter, and have consequently made some mistakes. We can often find some fault in ourselves, thus demonstrating that we are partly to blame for our sufferings. But in our Lord's case it was different. He received the slanders, the misrepresentation, and everything else that came against Him, without having any fault in Him at all. "He was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners," still He endured. We, though following in His footsteps, have not as much to endure as had the Master.

The Outcome of Our Faithful Endurance

We are also to consider the outcome. While the Father let Jesus die on the cross as a malefactor, yet He did not let our Lord go permanently, but kept His promise to raise Him from the dead. We have the promise that, as the Father raised up

Jesus from the dead, so also will He raise those up who are found worthy by being faithful unto death. In raising up Jesus the Father has given us a testimony to His faithfulness. In the case of Jesus, no one had set Him an example. It was all by faith with Him; none had gone before. With us it is different. Besides, we have not so much to lose as had our Lord. However, if we trust God, He is faithful to keep us and to do what He has promised—to raise us up with our Head. Consider what great things God has done for His Son. Consider also that He has promised us a share in our Lord's glory if we be found faithful. It is amazing—almost beyond conception! Unless God had made it plain, I fear that I would not be able to receive it. If he had said it but once, I might have doubted it; but since He has stated it over and over again in so many ways as to remove all grounds for doubt, I must believe it. How wonderful it seems!

Consider Him! Consider that God has highly exalted Him! Consider what a great privilege has been afforded us of walking in His footsteps, especially as our lives are so imperfect, so unsatisfactory even to ourselves, and as life is all that we have to give. . . . Then to think that we are in the last time **now**! We are right at the close of the Age. The New Dispensation is opening all around us, and the great majority of the people are so bewildered that they do not know what to make of the wonderful things of our day. "None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." (Daniel 12:10.) The Lord's true people are the only ones who have a correct understanding of these things.

How careful the people of God, therefore, should weigh their thoughts and deeds! "Seeing that these [present] things are to be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy living and godliness,** looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the Day of God! . . . According to His promise we look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless" in His sight. "Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."
—2 Peter 3:13-18.

Closing Exhortation

In view of what we see ahead of us as sharers with Jesus of His glory and honor, we should be leading holy lives. We should be living in the future rather than in the past. Do not think too much of the past. Let us not live in the past and dwell upon our mistakes and shortcomings, and thus be cast down; but let us believe that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9.) And we should have such an appreciation of these mercies and blessings of forgiveness as to show it forth in our conduct.

Let us give heed more and more to the suggestion of our text, and consider Him whom the Father has so greatly exalted—so highly exalted. . . . Then we shall cease to be weary and faint and shall become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might; we shall go on from grace to grace, from glory to glory; we shall be transformed by the renewing of our minds, more and more proving what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Then, finally, we shall attain unto the glorious things which He has in reservation for those who love Him more than parents, or children, or self, or any other person or thing.

"Hold on thy way with hope unchilled,
By faith and not by sight;
And thou shalt own His Word fulfilled—
'At eve it shall be light.'"
—Z. '17:99-101.

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How great stress the Lord lays everywhere upon the exercise of faith in the **Divine Power**! "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Those who cannot exercise the faith cannot have the blessing which others may have who do exercise faith; and our blessings increase in proportion as we will exercise our faith. Thus the Lord puts a premium upon this element of character, and makes it essential to His favor.—Z. '12:345.

◆

The Lord is ever present with his people. He is always thinking of us, looking out for our interests, guarding us in danger, providing for us in temporal and spiritual things, reading our hearts, marking every impulse of loving devotion to him, shaping the influences around us for our discipline and refining, and hearkening to our faintest call for aid or sympathy or fellowship with him. He is never for a moment off guard, whether we call to him in the busy noon hours or in the silent watches of the night. And not only is the Lord Jesus thus present, but the Father also. How blessed the realization of such abiding faithfulness! And no real child of God is devoid of this evidence of his adoption. Sometimes it is more manifest than at others; as, for instance, when some special trial of faith or patience or endurance necessitates the special call for special help, and forthwith comes the grace sufficient with a precious realization of its loving source. Thus

"E'en sorrow, touched by heaven, grows bright,
With more than rapture's ray,
As darkness shows us worlds of light
We never saw by day."

Every true child of God has these precious evidences of sonship, and the roughest places in his pathway are so illuminated with divine grace that they become the brightest, and memory continues to refer to them with thankfulness; and faith and hope and love grow strong and inspiring.—Z. '03:376, 377.

◆

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." (Psa. 19:7-9.) How true are these prophetic declarations may be comprehended only by those who have learned to appreciate the Word of God. It deters from sin, it encourages toward righteousness, it gives consolation in trouble, it gives strength and courage in a time of general fear and quaking, it gives wisdom in times of perplexity, and the result is that the people of the Lord have much advantage every way through it as respects the present life, besides the hope, the encouragement and the preparation which it gives for the life which is to come.—Z. '05:238.

◆

Read

We must distinguish between the overcoming of Jesus and that of His followers. His was a perfect overcoming. While He had the instruction of the Father and the help of the angels, He had no one as a sin-bearer, no one to impute any righteousness to Him. His overcoming was full and complete. His followers, being imperfect in the flesh, cannot do perfectly; and therefore by the grace of God it has been so arranged that these may be acceptable through Jesus, if they have the spirit to overcome, the desire to overcome—if they manifest righteousness of heart. But they must show this overcoming spirit, else they can never be associated with our Lord in His Kingdom. They must be copies of their Master in spirit, even though imperfect in the flesh.—Z. '14:11.

◆

The Lord will see our endeavor, our strenuous fighting to put off the old nature, to put off "the works of the flesh" and to be clothed with the garments of righteousness suitable to our relationship to Him, and our success will be proportionate to our attainment of the mind, or disposition of Christ—holy conformity to the will of the Father in all things. How comforting in this connection is the promise of our Lord, that our "Heavenly Father is more willing to give His Holy Spirit (the Spirit of holiness, the Spirit of wisdom) to them that ask Him than are earthly parents to give good gifts unto their children."—Luke 11:13.—Z. '12:179.

◆

REST IN GOD'S WILL

How sweet to feel God's will is best,
And in this precious thought to rest;
To know, whatever may betide,
'Tis best, for He is by our side!
—Z. '09:296.

◆

The Lord guards the penitent. A bruised reed he will not break, and smoking flax he will not quench. (Isa. 42:3.) If there be even a slight disposition to penitence, he fosters and cherishes it.—Z. '94:29.

Could we but keep ever before our minds the thought that we are on trial now, being tested, that we are being given opportunity to prove the sincerity and depth of our consecration to the Lord and to righteousness, the effect would surely be to spur us and energize us in the ways of the Lord. Let us remember, then, that this keeping under of the body appertains to our food as well as to our drink, to our thoughts as well as to our speech. Indeed all the difficulties with which we are obliged to contend begin in our thoughts, and by these, therefore, are we properly and justly measured by the Lord, who judges us not according to the imperfections of the flesh, which we have inherited, but according to our new minds, our new intentions, our new wills, our new hearts, and the energy and activity which these put forth in the keeping of the mortal body in subjection to the spirit, and so far as possible to the letter of the divine requirement.—Z. '06:362.

◆

Though storms and shakings may, while being experienced, seem very disastrous, we feel sure that the Lord will not forget his own, as it is written, "The Lord knoweth them that are his." We may be sure that he will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able—that if they see to it that their hearts are loyal to him such experiences will not work them injury but really benefit, for are not all the Lord's people to be "overcomers"? and is it not by the "trial of their faith" that they are to be tested and proved? and is it not for this reason that the Lord permits such shakings? And are not the brethren the stronger after they have passed through such an experience and reached the further side in safety? Are they not the more reliant upon the Lord and the power of his might? And will they not more closely watch, not only to keep their own garments unspotted, but to assist all the Lord's dear flock who may be in any danger or trouble through their own weaknesses or those of others?—Z. '06:389.

◆

Obedience to the Divine will is paramount every way, and holy privileges of the Church in spiritual matters must not be bartered for earthly advantage. The wrong course is symbolically prefigured in Esau's selling his birthright for a mess of pottage. (Heb. 12:16.) Every temptation to sacrifice spiritual privileges or violate spiritual responsibilities for the attainment of earthly advantages would be a yielding to this form of temptation.—Z. '10:9.

◆

Since his glorification the Lamb has been breaking the seven seals and thus opening the divine plan before men and angels, and we now living are privileged to share this knowledge more abundantly than others,—because, the last seal having bee broken, the scroll is open to all who follow t Lamb in love and obedience and meekness; and "the mystery of God is finished."—Rev. 10:7.—Z. '97:151.

Published by the Standfast Bible Students. Address all communications: Standfast Bible Students, Scott Building, 2659 Douglas Street, Victoria, B. C.

Old Corn Gems

No. 122

"And they did eat of the OLD CORN of the land on the morrow after the Passover . . . and the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the OLD CORN of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." Joshua 5:11-12.

A SAFE RULE

"WHERE A BROTHER GIVES AN INTERPRETATION OF A SCRIPTURE WHICH DIFFERS FROM THAT GIVEN BY BROTHER RUSSELL, AND BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION SEEMS REASONABLE AND IN HARMONY WITH THE PLAN OF GOD, THEN WE BELIEVE IT A SAFE RULE TO FOLLOW BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION, FOR THE REASON THAT HE IS THE SERVANT OF THE CHURCH, SO CONSTITUTED BY THE LORD FOR THE LAODICEAN PERIOD; AND THEREFORE WE SHOULD EXPECT THE LORD TO TEACH US THROUGH HIM. WHERE THERE ARISES A DOUBT IN THE MIND AS TO WHICH INTERPRETATION IS CORRECT, THEN IT IS ALWAYS SAFER TO RESOLVE THAT DOUBT IN FAVOR OF BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION. WE BELIEVE SUCH TO BE IN HARMONY WITH THE LORD'S WILL."—Z. '18:51.

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The Retributive Character of Divine Law

"Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."—Gal. 6: 7.

THE Apostle Paul here, addressing the Church, announces a principle of Divine Law which is applicable not only to the Church, but to all men everywhere. Hosea expresses the same truth, saying that if we sow to the wind we shall reap the whirlwind. (Hos. 8: 7.) Solomon says, if we sow iniquity, we reap vanity. (Prov. 22: 8.) St. Paul says, if we sow sparingly, we reap sparingly, and if we sow bountifully, we reap bountifully. (2 Cor. 9: 6.) This is equally true, whether we sow wild oats or good wheat.

It is in view of the harvest of the world's sowing, that we are informed that "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15: 3); that "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:14); and that "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known"; that "whatsoever has been spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light"; and that "spoken in the ear, in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the housetops [openly]." (Luke 12: 2, 3.) And again we read "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."—Rom. 12:19.

But when will this reckoning time come? for now, as saith the Prophet Malachi (3:15), men "call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." With the Psalmist (Psa. 94: 3, 4) we inquire, "Lord, how long shall the wicked triumph, and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?" The Apostle Paul answers that the Lord "hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained."—The Christ. (Acts 17: 31.) And "then," says the Prophet Malachi to those who fear the Lord and whom He hath chosen as His jewels, "shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not."—Mal. 3:18.

But take heed. The same Prophet raises a suggestive question, which all would do well to ponder. He asks, "Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap. . . . And I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, and the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not Me, saith the Lord of hosts."—Mal. 3: 2, 5.

The reference of these Scriptures is to the great judgment of the Day of the Lord—the day of trouble with which this Dispensation is to close—variously described as a day "of wrath," "of vengeance," "of recompense," and as a "time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation."

But while this great judgment will have to do with the world in general—with nations and corporations and all civil, social and religious organizations of men; and while it will touch the cases of all the individuals living at that time, we naturally inquire where retributive justice came, or is to come in, in dealing with all the generations of the past?

Our Lord answers the question when He says, "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection by judgment." (John 5: 28, 29; see R. V. and Diaglott.) The whole Millennial Age is thus set forth as a "day" of reckoning, of trial, of judgment. In that searching judgment there will be a reckoning, even for every pernicious word (Matt. 12: 36); and by submitting and learning obedience under those judgments, the masses of mankind who **will to obey** are to be gradually raised up to perfection of being, as well as of knowledge.

Retribution vs. Forgiveness of Sin

But here a philosophic and important question arises as to the extent to which the **justification** of a sinner, through faith in the precious blood of Christ, and his full consecration to do the Father's will, may intercept the course of the Law, that a man must reap what he has sown. In other words, Will his new relationship to God save him from a miserable harvest of a former sowing of wild oats?

We answer, Yes; in one sense it will. The just penalty for all sin is **death**—the severest penalty that can be inflicted. And from this penalty his justification freely exonerates him. His past iniquities and sins will no more rise up in judgment against him, demanding their just penalty—death; for "blessed are they whose iniquity is forgiven and whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute [reckon] sin." (Rom. 4: 7, 8.) All who by faith in Christ's sacrifice for sin and by consecration of heart and life to God's service come to Him are thus blessed. The iniquity, or legal sentence, of such is passed altogether or forgiven; and while the results of their sins, the harvest of their misdeeds sown before they came to a realization of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, or to an appreciation of God's mercy in Christ, are still painfully with them, yet they are assured that these are **covered**. . . . They are further assured that God's provision for them is that they may some day be **healed,** or cured, of the weaknesses brought on them through sin and now reckoned as "covered" from the Divine eye.

With the Church these sins, or actual defects, are to be **blotted out** or **wiped out** when the Times of Restitution shall arrive, at the Second Advent of Christ. (Acts 3:19.) The result of this blotting or wiping out of sin will be new bodies, new beings—free from sin, from imperfection and every consequence and evidence of sin. With the Church, this cleansing and blotting out process begins with the present life, and will be completed early in the Millennial Day (Psa. 46:5) by a share in the First Resurrection.

The world's cleansing time will be the entire Millennial Age, or "Day of Judgment," when those who then shall accept Christ and the New Covenant may gradually be cleansed and healed. At the close of that Age, if faithful to their opportunities, they may be presented blameless and perfect before God, needing no further healing nor cleansing, but each being, as was Adam, a human image of the Divine Creator—a perfect man.

The Scriptures, as well as observation, assure us that our justification before God does not remove at once and without our co-operation all the results of previous transgressions. The harvest is like in kind to the sowing; but the penitent and forgiven one has the promise of grace to help in the battle with his inherited as well as cultivated weaknesses; and so we read (1 John 1:9), "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." It is in this cleansing process which follows vitalized justification that the consecrated believer must of necessity suffer from some of the baneful results of a past course of sin—reap the reward of his former sowing. While the Lord will be very merciful in dealing with him, nevertheless, as a Wise Physician, He will not spare the necessary experience to eradicate the deep-seated evil propensities of long cultivation in the past.

Retributive Justice the Basis of Divine Law

Here the retributive character of Divine Law is especially noteworthy. Men often make a distinction between the law of nature and the moral law, calling the one natural and the other Divine. But the fixed principles of both are of Divine origin, and accomplish the Divine will in their operation. Both operate on the basis of retributive justice. ' All Divine Law, whether of nature or of morals, is but the operation of certain fixed principles of righteousness, having for their object the peace and happiness of all intelligent creatures under its jurisdiction. Obedience to this Law brings its reward of happiness, while any interference with it incurs its certain penalty.

If you hold your hand before the fire, it will be warmed, and your comfort and happiness will be thus ministered to; if you put your hand into the fire, it will be burned, and you will suffer pain. Thus the law of nature, which was designed to comfort and bless us, is also prepared to punish us if we violate its proper use. And not only so, but it is prepared to grade its penalties in proportion to the aggravation of the offense against it.

If you put your hand into the fire for a very short time, it will be scorched; persist a little longer, and it will be blistered; and a little longer still, and it will be consumed. Applied properly to the cooking of your food, fire will reward you with a savory meal; but applied improperly, it may render the food undesirable or unfit for use. Water, also one of our greatest blessings, becomes, if the law of nature be disregarded, an agent of death and destruction. So throughout the laws of nature we might trace retribution.

In the realm of moral law, the case is the same. If you violate the principles of righteousness, you deface the image of God in your being. Impure thoughts write in clearly legible signs upon the countenance the dark lines of a bad character; while pure, just and noble thoughts illuminate the countenance and render the pure character transparent to beholders. And the operations of moral law are as sure and reliable as are those of natural law.

The fact that the retribution—the reward or the penalty—is often delayed is frequently presumed upon by the foolish, who vainly think they can sow their crop of wild oats and never realize their harvest. Both individuals and nations have long presumed to act upon this hazardous and vain hypothesis; and well, indeed would it be if they would even now hearken to the Apostle's warning: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

The operations of this law are most manifest upon classes and nations — first, because their prominence gives them world-wide publicity; and second, because their judgment must of necessity be in the present life, since beyond the grave the present order of society will have no existence. A glance at the pages of history reveals the fact that all the nations of the past have reaped a bitter harvest, and amid harrowing scenes have breathed their last. They had their rising, their struggling periods, and their flourishing eras; and then "pride and fulness of bread" caused them to rest in fancied security, and to sink in the scale of morals, until their decline was followed by their fall. They reaped what they had sown.

Just now, all the nations of the world are fast approaching the most terrible crises of their national existences. In a great time of unparalleled trouble, which is even now imminent, they are about to reap what they have sown. They have sown to the wind the seeds of selfishness, and now they are about to reap the whirlwind of terror and the destruction of all law and order, and of national and social organization.

The Operation of the Law of Retribution in Individual Cases

The operation of this law in individual cases, though not so prominent, is none the less sure. Every thought harbored, every disposition exercised and cultivated, becomes a component part of individual character; and this character, which is more or less tender in early life, becomes fixed in the course of years. If the cultivation of character has been along the lines of righteousness and truth, according to the light possessed—whether of conscience merely, or of revelation also—the ripened fruit of an established, right-preferring and benevolent character is a blessed harvest in comparison with others, the reverse. If the cultivation has been along the lines of depravity, self-gratification and degradation, the terrible fruits are a fearful penalty.

Even though such a one be freely forgiven upon repentance and faith in the Redeemer—fully absolved from legal condemnation through Christ, who bore its Divinely pronounced penalty, death—

nevertheless, the fruits of his sowing are manifest in his character. Evil propensities must all be rooted out and a proper character formed at a considerable cost of painful, but valuable experience; for God is just, not only to forgive us our sins, but also to **cleanse us** from all unrighteousness. The eradicating of these evil dispositions, propensities and appetites, deep-rooted and long-cultivated, will cause great disturbances of the soil in which they have grown; and pain as well as joy will attend their removal, and their replacement with the graces of the Spirit.

The Lord, as a Wise Physician, will be as merciful and tender with His patient as the necessities of the case will permit. All will be shown their need of His aid, but no patient will be treated further except with his own consent and co-operation. With the Church this treatment takes place in the present life and is a treatment of the **will** rather than of the body; for although the body will be greatly helped by the treatment, it is not the Great Physician's purpose to **cure** these marred bodies, but to give to this class perfect spirit bodies early in the Millennial Day. In these the consecrated **will** is being transformed and renewed to perfect harmony with the will of God, the mind of Christ. The "overcomers," the true Church, passing through difficulties and cleansing and trials of faith and afflictions now, and being approved of the Lord, will not come into the judgment (trial) of the Millennial Age (1 Cor. 11:32); but, with the Redeemer, their Lord, will be Kings and Priests of God, who shall judge the world and recompense to them good or evil, impartially, under the terms of the New Covenant.—1 Cor. 6:2.

Judgment Day Experiences Heart Searching

Another feature of retribution upon the world during the Millennial trial will be the publicity which will then be given to the reaping and to the deeds of the past. Our Lord has so intimated, saying, "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known," etc. (Matt. 10:26; Luke 12:2, 3.) This also will come about in a natural way, when in that day all that are in their graves shall come forth. Then the murderer and his victim, the debtor and his creditor, the thief and his dupe, the defamer and the defamed, must face each other and the facts, which, with even the secret motives, will be discerned. The terms of their reconciliation to each other and to the Judge will be equitable, and will be known to all.

Past history will have proclaimed to the world the character of many a Nero; but additionally, there will be the necessity of their seeing the former victims of their ignoble cruelty, and facing them in the light of a new and healthy public sentiment, which will manifest crime in all its horrid deformity. Truly such "shall awake to shame and lasting [Heb. olan] contempt," even in their own eyes; for as the renewed manhood of the race begins to assert itself, they will the more fully realize the depth of the pit of degradation whence they were digged; and even the generous forgiveness of formerly injured and outraged fellow men will be a great humiliation. It will truly be, as the Scriptures suggest, the heaping of coals of fire on their heads (Prov. 25:21, 22; Rom. 12:20), so great will be their shame and confusion.—Jer. 20:11.

It should be borne in mind, too, that the only standard of judgment in public sentiment at that time will be **character.** None of the **false** standards —wealth, noble birth, or aristocracy of power, by which men are often measured now, and under which cloaks the wicked often take shelter—will then avail anything; for under the New Dispensation, men will come forth shorn of all their former possessions. They will have neither wealth nor power; and in the light of that Age, heredity will be nothing whereof to boast.

The same conditions which will thus expose the evils of the past life and thus, in the natural operations of moral law, bring about a measure of retribution to the evil-doers, will also make manifest the good deeds of the righteous, so that even the slightest favors done for others, deeds which at the time blessed the characters of the doers, will then be recognized and appreciated.

Operation of Retributive Law Natural

In this view of the matter we can see how, in a perfectly natural way, a man must reap the harvest of his sowing of wild oats, even though he has been freely forgiven, absolved from guilt and its penalty, death, and legally justified through faith in Christ. He will reap it, not only in the difficulties he will have piled up for himself in the hardening of his own character, making the steps up to perfection more painful and slow, and requiring severer discipline, but also in the just disapproval, or indignation of a righteous public sentiment in that Millennial Day of Judgment.

Such will be the natural and inevitable results of present wrong-doing. One consolation, however, will be the fact that this humiliation in some measure, at least, will be **shared by all**; "for there is none righteous [none perfect], no, not one" (Rom. 3:10); and all must pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others." It will indeed be a time for melting and mellowing all hearts. Thus the Lord will take away the stony heart and give to all who under the New Covenant shall become **His people** (typified by Israel) a heart of flesh, according to His promise.—Ezek. 36:22-28.

In some instances a portion of the reaping is experienced in the present life; and in some it will be in the life to come, as the Apostle intimates in 1 Tim. 5:24, 25. So also good works are sometimes manifest now, and rightly appreciated and rewarded. But whether now or hereafter, our Lord's assurance is that even the gift of a cup of cold water to one of His disciples, **because** he is His disciple, shall have its reward (Matt. 10:40-42); so minute will be the Lord's cognizance of character and works, and His rewards therefor; and they will be none the less **His** rewards because accomplished in the natural operation of retributive laws.

A murderer may be one who has little or no knowledge of God, whose hereditary disadvantages may be great and whose environment may be very unfavorable. He may meet with a just recompense for his crime at the hands of his fellow men, and yet in due time come forth from his grave **unto** [the privileges and opportunities of] a resurrection [lifting up—all the way up] by judgment [trial, discipline]. If obedient, he may reach the height of perfection and life everlasting, although the sins of his past life may have made mountains of difficulties in his character for him to clamber over during that Judgment Age.

On the other hand, one may be a moral man, who has "tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the Age to come" and who has been made a partaker of the spirit of holiness through faith in Christ; yet he may permit envy and strife to take possession of his heart; and he may **hate his brother,** though he outwardly violates no law and is esteemed among men. Such a one is a **murderer** at heart (1 John 3:15), though restrained from outward violence by respect for the opinions of others or by fear of the consequences. Who will deny that such a one, because of light enjoyed, may have even greater difficulties to overcome in the reformation of his character than the grosser, but ignorant, murderer? To whom much is given in the way of knowledge, opportunity, etc., of him much will be required. (Luke 12:48.) That judgment will be according to knowledge and ability to do right—a just recompense of reward.

Sequence the Divine Arrangement Regarding Retribution

Only the idiotic and the insane are in total darkness. All others have had at least a conscience, and few have been without some hope of reward in following its dictates, though as St. Paul says, they had no hope and were without God in the world. They were without the only real hope—the Gospel. (Eph. 2:12.) Previous to the announcement of the Gospel hope of everlasting life, and its foreshadowing in Israel, the hope of the world in general was only for the present rewards of righteousness. And no other hope was clearly held out, even to Israel, although there were hints and foreshadowings to them of the Gospel hope, as there was also in the promise given in Eden—that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. These gleams of hope were doubtless treasured up and reasoned upon by the more thoughtful minds; but the masses of men discerned only the simple lesson that honesty, righteousness, was the best present policy.

But when Christ came, He "brought life [everlasting] and immortality [clearly] to light through the Gospel." (2 Tim. 1:10.) Since then, proportionately as men have come directly or indirectly in contact with that Gospel, their responsibility has been increased, whether they accepted or rejected, opposed or ignored it. As it is written, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."—John 3:19.

The Divine arrangement regarding retribution seems generally to be that of **sequence,** so that under it rewards and punishments follow naturally, as the results of obedience or disobedience to law. Yet in the cases both of rewards and of penalties God sometimes steps beyond this order; as for instance, when He exalts the Church with Christ, their Head, to the Divine nature, Kingdom and glory; and when He brings upon Satan and his followers **swift destruction** at the end of the Millennial Age. His extraordinary methods have also been occasionally manifested in the past; viz., in the destruction of the world by the flood, in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the confusion of tongues at Babel, and other instances of minor note. But these are special and exceptional exhibitions both of His wrath and of His grace.

A just estimate of the Lord's dealings in the future judgment of the repentant of the world may be approximated by a careful observance of His dealings with His justified and consecrated children now. Though justified, we are not liberated from all the consequences of our past ignorance or waywardness. If in youthful ignorance and waywardness bad habits were contracted which have impaired health and weakened moral and physical powers, we have all the difficulties to struggle against now, though we realize the Divine forgiveness and assistance.

This is our judgment day; and the judgment of the world will proceed upon the same general principles. They will first be brought to a knowledge of the Truth, and will then be judged according to their use or abuse of that knowledge after they receive it, as worthy or unworthy of life. The good and bad actions of their first life, previous to their knowledge of the Truth, will enter into this judgment only in the natural order of the retributive character of moral Law.—Z. '12:367-370.

"Choose You This Day Whom Ye Shall Serve"

Joshua 24:14-25.

DECISION, one of the most important elements of Christian character, is the essence of this lesson. When Joshua was about 110 years old, realizing that his course was about run, he called a general assembly of the Israelites, presumably the heads of every tribe and family, and reviewed before them the Lord's mercies from the time of the call of Abraham. It was now about thirty years since Joshua had succeeded Moses as the leader and law-giver, the judge of the nation. Under his able administration Canaan had been divided amongst the tribes, and a quarter of a century of prosperity in the new land had followed, not, however, without its conflicts and difficulties. In leaving the people Joshua sought to impress upon them not only the blessings and favors that they had received of the Lord, but also the obligations which they had assumed in becoming his people prospectively; heirs of the Abrahamic covenant, and blessers of all the nations of the earth. He shows how Abraham's fore-fathers had been idolaters "on the other side of the flood," that is, on the other side of the great river Euphrates; and that God's favor had been markedly with Abraham and his posterity up to the time of which he spoke. In order to impress upon their minds what they might expect of the Lord in the future, he calls pointedly to their attention his dealings with them in the past, the lessons in Egypt, the deliverances, the crossing of the Red Sea, the experiences of the wilderness, their crossing of Jordan into the land of promise, their conquest of the land against the various inhabitants. He would have them remember that these victories were not of their own strength or ability or wisdom, but that the Lord was on their side; calling attention also to one of the great battles in which their enemies were discomfitted by great swarms of hornets, and then he comes to the exhortation which constitutes this lesson.

It is profitable, too, that the spiritual Israelite frequently take such a review of God's providences. He may look back not only to God's manifestations of favor and power during the Jewish age to natural Israel, but he may see also divine favor of another time granted to spiritual Israel during this age. Noting the differences of dispensations, he can see that God's blessings were of a temporal kind during the Jewish age; that those who were faithful to the Lord were blessed in their flocks and herds and earthly advantages and health, while during this age those who reverently obey the Lord and seek to walk in his ways are blessed in spiritual things; he opens the eyes of their understanding, feeds their hearts; grants them refreshment of the water of life, and light of the knowledge of the goodness of God which shines in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord, and makes known to his faithful the lengths and breadths and depths and heights of divine love, wisdom and power. They now realize a protection from the world, the flesh and the adversary, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding rules in their hearts, even though the same divine providence may permit them to have various trials and difficulties, persecutions and disappointments and reverses, physical, financial and social. The spiritual Israelite's evidence of divine favor on his behalf is in the healing of his soul from the sicknesses of sin, and in the invigoration of the new life, and in the victories over the weaknesses of the flesh and the oppositions of the Adversary—these are potent arguments with the spiritual Israelite respecting the goodness and faithfulness of our God, as the temporal victories recited by Joshua were evidences of them to the natural Israelites.

As Moses before he died had called upon Israel to renew their covenant with the Lord, so Joshua desired at the close of his days to make an appeal to his brethren on behalf of faithfulness to the Lord, that would long be remembered by them. He recognized the fact that God seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth —not of fear, not of compulsion but of a willing mind, and his argument accordingly was along this line—Brethren, let us make a firm resolve that in view of God's goodness to us we will ever be faithful to him: let us fear him in the sense of reverencing his commands, in the sense of fearing to displease one who has been so gracious to us; let us remember, too, that notwithstanding his graciousness, he is dealing with us along the line of principle, and that if we depart from the principles he approves his blessing and favor will depart from us. Let us put away, therefore, the gods which your fathers served, and serve Jehovah only. It may have been that there was still a lurking of idolatry amongst the people, or it may have been that Joshua was merely guarding them against the idolatrous tendencies which more or less assail all mankind—a tendency to forget more or less the invisible God and to set upon earthly objects—idols —the affections and reverence which properly belong to him. Joshua would incite the people to a good resolution.

Just so, too, we see that spiritual Israelites need frequently to incite one another to faithfulness to God, to an appreciation of what he has done for us and what he rightly expects of us, and to caution one another against what we recognize to be the tendencies of the world — the drawing away of our hearts and affections toward earthly things.

The Israelites had come into a land whose people practiced idolatry accompanied by a lascivious form of worship, and there the laws of God upon them would necessarily mean restraint against which their fallen natures would more or less rebel, and Joshua wished them to have these matters well before their minds and to decide the question of loyalty to God in full view of the facts as they already realized them, or would subsequently appreciate them; on the one hand were the license and attractions of the sensuous forms of idolatry and the pleasures of sin such as they are, for a season, with divine disfavor; on the other hand were the restraints of the divine law accompanied by divine favor, protection and care, relating not only to the present life, but to that also which is to come. He inquired whether it seemed evil—that is undesirable—to them to be Israelites, to be God's people, to be under the restraints of his laws in order to have his favor and blessing. They would as a people now be tested along this line individually and nationally, and he desired to anticipate the coming tests and trials of their faith and obedience by fortifying their minds and leading them to make a decision one way or another. Then as a leader he took his own position most positively on the side of the Lord, saying, "As for me and my house (my family) we will serve the Lord."

Many would be inclined to doubt the wisdom of setting before the people such a choice; they would be inclined, on the contrary, to leave no choice about it, but to insist and demand that the Lord be recognized and obeyed at all hazards. But really Joshua was merely emphasizing the choice which God puts before people continually; he leaves them open to choose good or evil,—to serve him, or to serve self or sin or wealth or other idols. As a matter of fact we have no right to attempt compulsion, because the Lord leaves the matter open for choice, as Joshua did; he is seeking those who desire to be his servants, his peculiar people; those who do not so desire he does not desire, and he is not calling them and drawing them now. Our Master emphasized this lesson in his preaching, saying to the Jews, "If any man will come after me (as a disciple), let him take up his cross and follow me"; he exhorts them furthermore to sit down and count the cost of discipleship before undertaking to make a choice, just as Joshua in this lesson drew before the minds of his hearers something of the two sides of the question which he exhorts them to decide properly on the Lord's side,—on the side of life and peace and blessing and the promises of God.

Although this matter of choosing was left open to the people during the Jewish age, and under the still higher call during the Gospel age, yet it will not be so left open during the Millennial Age; men will not then be invited to choose whom they will serve and worship; on the contrary, when the Kingdom has been established, the law shall go forth, and without asking for the preferences of any for good or for evil, obedience will be enforced and the evilly disposed will be forcibly restrained. Such a reign of law and order will be maintained and those who will not conform thereto will be chastened as well as instructed, and all who shall not come into accord with that Kingdom and its law of righteousness outwardly, and ultimately conform to it heartily, will be cut off in the Second Death. —Acts 3:23.

The people responded nobly, that they appreciated God's care and blessings and that they would be faithful and loyal to him; but realizing that promises are easily made and need to be deeply impressed, Joshua repeated the injunction the second time (verse 19) saying in substance: Ye can not serve the Lord easily,—you must not imagine that the promises you are making can be kept without considerable effort, neither must you imagine that a partial perfunctory observance of the divine law will please the Lord or have his blessing,—he is a jealous God. As a husband or wife having entered into the marriage relationship would properly be jealous of any intrusion or indifference or coldness, so the Lord having accepted Israel as his peculiar people would watch over them with a jealous care, would not be indifferent if they divided their affections or worship as between him and others. And God is the same today and forever, and wishes his Spiritual Israel to understand that to abide in his love means obedience to his regulations, all of which are reasonable services. He would have us understand, clearly, that while he has favored us by lifting our feet from the horrible pit and miry clay of sin, condemnation and death, and has justified us, placing our feet upon the rock, Christ Jesus,—although he has adopted us into his family accepted in the Beloved one, nevertheless, having done these favors for us he would disown us and cast us off as unworthy of further favor if we deliberately prove unfaithful to him.

As the Israelites re-affirmed their decision to be faithful to the Lord so let us Spiritual Israelites engrave deeply upon our hearts our consecration, and let us frequently revive and review that consecration that the cares of life do not obliterate it to any degree.

But these two exhortations and two responses were still not enough for Joshua, for a third time, as still further and more deeply impressing the lesson, he exhorted them not only to put away all thought of idolatry, but, on the other hand, to incline their hearts to the Lord. It is after we have become God's people through justifying faith, after he has called us no longer servants, but sons, that he speaks to us, saying, "My son give me thine heart." To give the heart to the Lord means a full consecration of the will and hence of every hope, ambition and interest; and this is really the only way in which we can assure ourselves that no form of worldly idolatry will have any place in our lives. If we merely attempt to serve the Lord in an outward way ceremoniously and nominally, it will be but a little while until insidiously the world, the flesh and the Adversary will draw our attention and energies away from the Lord to various things, entangling them in various earthly alliances and worships that will mean spiritual poverty and lukewarmness, if not absolute coldness of heart towards the Lord. Let us, therefore, like those addressed by Joshua, reach a positive decision once for all; and whatever it may cost and however seductive and beautiful the service and worship of self or Mammon may appear to us, let us, in view of the experiences of the past and the promises which reach into the future, decide that we will serve the Lord; not waiting for him to raise his hands in judgments and denunciations, but listening for his voice that we may know his will and do it.

There were three witnesses to this contract or covenant. The first was the people themselves who would now long remember this covenant thrice repeated. The second was Joshua's declaration, in connection probably with the tables of the Law, that Israel's covenant was renewed by statute and ordinance — that the original covenant of Sinai had been ratified, reaffirmed. The third witness was a monumental stone which he "erected under an oak" [or oak grove] that was about [near] the sanctuary of the Lord. This also would be a witness to them of what they had done—of their pledge to the Lord in the presence of Joshua. So it is well for the Lord's spiritual people to do more than merely make a covenant or agreement with the Lord in their hearts and minds. That decision of the mind is important first; but it needs besides helps, such for instance, as a confession of it before the fellow members; and it needs some memorial of it, as for instance in the baptismal memorial of consecration unto death.

Because of our weaknesses through the fall, and because of the seductions of the Adversary and the world, we need to hedge about the new mind and its good resolutions so that we may be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Let every true Israelite adopt the words of Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," and as this would mean no light matter for himself so, also, it should be no meaningless phrase as respects his household; it should mean that his children shall be trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; it should mean that minor children shall not be allowed to rule the house nor to discredit parents outside the home, but that the parental influence exercised in kindness, in love and in firmness, shall seek to bring the children of each family so far as possible into covenant relationship to the Lord, instructing them in the way of the Lord, both by precept and example.—Z. '02: 313-315.

Interesting Questions Answered

PROPER BASIS OF HONOR IN THE CHURCH

Question.—Matthew 20:27 reads, "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." Is it a proper desire to be chief among the Lord's people, and are we to understand that the positions in the Kingdom of Heaven will be assigned entirely on the basis of the amount of service we render here?

Answer.—The Lord had been pointing out to His disciples a certain weakness on their part—a desire to be the greatest—a desire that is general in the human family—an ambitious spirit. The context says that amongst the Gentiles there are some who exercise a lordship and have others to serve them in a menial way, but that this was not to be the case amongst the disciples of Jesus. They were to be actuated by a different spirit. With the followers of Christ there is not to be a spirit to dominate, to rule others, but a spirit of love, which seeks to serve others, to do for others, a spirit which is willing to sacrifice personal interest in the service of others.

On this basis we consider further the words of this text. There will be some among the Lord's people who will be chief. It is necessarily so in any company or class or association where people are not all equal in talents—where some are born with more talents and some with less. Some one is bound to be chief. An absolute equality is not possible.

It is advisable, too, that there be some among the saints of God to guide the Church. What, then, is to be the standard as to who is to be chief? Shall it be the one who would browbeat the others? No; this is not the standard. Shall it be one who will have a masterful influence and pleasant words, who will dominate merely because of some talent, or because of superior education or wealth—something of this kind? No; this could not be the standard. What then, will be the standard as to those who will be recognized as chief ones in the Church?

Have No Ambition for Personal Glory

We reply, We should look for those who have most of the spirit of service. He who renders the greatest amount of service and brings the greatest spiritual blessing to the Class—the one who tries most to truly serve—consider him your chief. While our Lord's words were addressed to all the Apostles, and not merely to one individual, yet they are applicable also to the individual. The thought should come home to each of our hearts, that if any of us have ambition for service in some special capacity, we are not to do like worldly people. We should take the opposite track, and leave any honor of men out of the question entirely. We should leave God to attend to that matter as shall seem to Him best, and be content merely to be a servant to the brethren. Let the Lord see how willing you are to serve in any manner.

The person without any ambition never amounts to anything. We need to have ambition if we are sowing or plowing or whatever we are doing—we need ambition to spur us on to do whatever we do in a satisfactory manner. And so if we have the opportunity of serving the Truth, we should seek to serve it in the most capable manner possible. Otherwise we should not be capable servants of the Lord.

But we are to lay aside any desire to be chief so far as ambition for personal glory is concerned. We are to seek to serve the Lord the best we know how. If you can serve the Lord in some respects better than I, and I can learn something from you, well and good. And if afterwards you can learn something from me, so be it. True, we should be patterning after that which is especially commendable and doing all we can to further the Lord's Cause. And this service should be prompted by love. Any service not prompted by love is not acceptable in the sight of the Lord.—Z. '15: 326, 327.

POSITION OF THE WORLD IN MILLENNIAL AGE.

Question.—Are the sins of the world class all canceled at death? or, is only their Adamic penalty paid? and do they have an individual penalty still to pay?

Answer.—The sins of the whole world are paid, as far as divine justice is concerned—that is to say—God's account against Adam and his posterity has been sold, transferred and set over to him who purchased the same with his own precious blood.

The sins of the world are not canceled, so far as they are concerned; but a way is opened up, under the New Covenant, by which each can obtain a release. The terms are that when brought to a knowledge of Christ and the redemption in him each for himself shall will to reform and no longer to serve sin, but to serve the Redeemer and to obey him.

In view of this opportunity of retracing steps, it is proper for us to say that every word and action on the part of the world is either building up character or undermining it—either blessing or injuring the doer—either increasing or decreasing the number and weight of his stripes of punishment, all of which will be corrective.

Thus we may say that the Adamic penalty is set aside until such time as the individual shall have been granted a trial on his own account. If in this trial on his own account he sins wilfully refusing to follow the instructions of his Redeemer, he will be dropped back again into the original penalty—"returned into sheol"—which will be the Second Death.

Thus seen, the only individual penalty they have to pay will be that represented in their own degradation. We might include in this penalty any sins which they might commit in the present life against any degree of light; for such sins bring a special searing of conscience which the same deeds committed in ignorance would not bring. Hence all who thus sin against light receive proportionately a deeper degradation and will have correspondingly the more difficulty in extricating themselves, and returning to perfection under the favorable conditions of the next age.

The world of mankind are not reckoned as coming into existence a second time, but as having their previous existence revived and continued, with the privilege of accepting Christ under the New Covenant, and being regenerated by him, and thus attaining life—resurrection by judgment, which will progress throughout the Millennial age, and reach completion at its close — those who accept there will reach perfect life, while those who reject will there be destroyed in the Second Death. From this standpoint the only effect of good and evil in the present life will be upon man's own conscience and character.—Z. '02: 334, 335.

Gideon's Band Triumphant

Judges 7:1-8.

"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man."—Psa. 118: 8.

GIDEON was one of the judges of Israel raised up by the Lord. He delivered his people from the Midianites who had invaded Palestine and taken possession of its most fertile part, pillaging the country of its produce. Under God's special covenant with Israel we know that he would have protected them from these invaders had they remained faithful to him. We are not surprised, therefore, that the narrative shows that the Israelites at this time had succumbed to the idolatrous influences of the Canaanites who still dwelt in the land. Gideon's father was one of the chief men of his tribe and district, and upon his plantation he had erected a statue to Baal in the midst of a consecrated grove, on a hilltop. Notwithstanding this established idolatry in the home, Gideon appears to have had considerable knowledge of the true God and of the deliverances effected by him for his people in the past, and when conversing with his angel visitor he shows not only his knowledge of the Lord's dealings in the past, but his surprise that he had ceased to care for his people. It did not seem even to occur to him that the Lord's disfavor, as manifested in the successes of the Midianites against Israel, was on account of Israel's disloyalty to the Lord in idolatry, etc. It is probable that this same sentiment pervaded the nation in general and that, in some sense of the word, they respected Jehovah at the same time they worshipped Baal also.

God's favors to spiritual Israel and his protection are along spiritual lines against spiritual enemies and spiritual difficulties; and yet, how few spiritual Israelites when they get into spiritual difficulties realize that it must, in some sense of the word, be traceable to the Lord's providences! How few of them properly look to see to what extent their spiritual adversities, weaknesses, coldness, alienation from the Lord, etc., are due to the permission of some kind of idolatry in their hearts! Not an idolatry, probably, that entirely ignores the Lord; but one which, while thinking favorably of his spiritual blessings and victories of the past, simply wonders at his disfavor of the present, and fails to recognize that it is impossible to serve at the same time both God and Mammon; that God's favor and close communion and protection can not be expected while we permit in our hearts a rival reverence for wealth or fame or human institutions and creeds, or self or family, to any degree or extent.

Evidently the Lord saw that the Israelites were at this time ripe for a change;—that under the adversities inflicted through their enemies they were humbled to such an extent that they would be ready to see where was their fault, and to turn from idolatry again to the Lord. But the Lord wished an agent for his service, and instead of using a supernatural one—an angel—he chose, as usual, to use a man. And he chose, as usual, to use a suitable man, fit for the purpose. Gideon would seem to have been a man of middle age, for he had a son at this time of probably fifteen years of age; he was well born, as is implied by the record that he was fine of form and feature.

True, the adage is "handsome is, that handsome does"; it is true, too, that some who are handsome fail to measure up to their appearance in the conduct of life; nevertheless, it is beyond question that to those who can read character, the face and form, unless marred by accident, indicate the character and the training. The noble, the brave, the generous, the wise, by nature, by birth, show these qualities in feature and form; nevertheless God is not always able to use as his servants the naturally noblest and finest of the human family: too frequently with such nobility goes a spirit of pride and self-conceit, which renders the individual unsuited to the Lord's purposes of the present time, when humility and obedience to the Lord are the prime essentials. The Apostle noted this, saying that not many wise, not many noble, not many learned hath God chosen, but the weak things and the ignoble things—rich in faith, heirs of the Kingdom. (1 Cor. 1:26.) How gracious is this arrangement which opens the way to the highest divine favor for the humblest who hears the voice of the Lord and responds thereto with humility and zeal! Let the ignoble, then, who have tasted of the Lord's grace, be encouraged to trust that even though ignoble by nature the grace of the Lord is able to work in them such a transformation of character that they may in heart, at least, become copies of God's dear Son, and thus be prepared for the finishing touches of our promised "change" in the First Resurrection.

As Gideon's band may be considered a figure or illustration of the overcomers of the Gospel age, the Church, the little flock,—so Gideon himself would fitly represent the Captain of our salvation, whose example we are to follow, and whose character is to impress all his followers. Of Gideon it is declared that he looked like a king's son — that in appearance, form, etc., he had a nobility which marked him as above the ordinary rank and file. So our Lord Jesus is the King's Son, and so all whom he accepts to be of his little band, his little flock, are to be conformed to his image by the power of God working in them "to will and do of his good pleasure"; working in them through a knowledge of the truth;—the knowledge of the exceeding great and precious promises of God's Word. Whatever they are by nature, it is God's design that eventually they shall be like their Lord and Captain, see him as he is and share his glory and honor.

After receiving the Lord's invitation to be the deliverer of his people, Gideon also received a test: he was to hew down the trees constituting the grove of Baal and was to overthrow the statue and was to offer to the Lord sacrifices upon a rock, using the wood from Baal's grove and image as the fuel. Sure that he was following the Lord's command, he did not wait to gain even the consent of his father, much less that of his people in that vicinity who he knew would be greatly incensed by such a procedure. Assuring himself that his commands were of the Lord, he hesitated not one moment but accomplished the destruction and made the offering, doing the work by night knowing it would be interrupted by the people if done in the day time. The citizens of his clan demanded his life, appealing the matter to his father who, evidently, was a chief amongst them; but the wise decision of the father was that if Baal could not defend himself against his son, there was certainly no need of any one taking up the cause of Baal.

Thus the Lord protected the one whom he had chosen for his servant and brought him more markedly than ever before the attention of the people, so that when he sent out invitations for volunteers from various quarters, an army of thirty-odd thousand assembled to his standard. Then came the sifting which is particularly noted in this lesson; (1) Gideon's army had a chance to see the hosts of the enemy, more than five times as numerous; (2) they had a chance to consider that their enemies were used to warfare while they as a people had for now a long time been accustomed to the peaceable pursuits of agriculture. When, therefore, Gideon requested that as many as felt fearful should withdraw, it depleted his army to the extent of two-thirds; yet many if not all of these who first volunteered but were now rejected, probably had an opportunity a little later on of joining in the battle after the Midianites had been discomfited and were in full retreat. But the ten thousand courageous men, fearless in the presence of an enemy many times their own strength, must have been men of faith in the Lord, men who, in some respects at least, resembled Gideon, in their hearts, in their courage, in their trust in Jehovah; nevertheless there were still too many for the Lord's purpose, and a thorough sifting was made by which the Lord separated three hundred of their number for his special service under Gideon.

The selection of Gideon's little flock reminds us of the selection of the Lord's spiritual people. Of these there is first a call to faith in the Lord, resulting in justification and acceptance; secondly, there is a call to consecration, in full view of the requirements, in full view of the enemy, and our Captain requests all of the justified ones who come to him to sit down first and count the cost, whether or not they are willing to sacrifice their all under his leadership. The large majority when they come to see the cost, to realize the battle that must be waged between the followers of the Lord and the forces of the world, the flesh and the Devil, are rather inclined to say, We prefer not to engage in battle, we are timid, we are fearful, we have not sufficient confidence either in Gideon or Gideon's God. It is in accord with the Lord's will that such should be considered separate from God's army, though they may have subsequently an opportunity for joining in the battle against evil.

It is not sufficient that we should have faith in the Lord and in the Captain of our salvation and should make our consecration to the Lord's will; but further tests are made with the view to making a final selection of a very special class to constitute the little flock. It will be the test of water —symbolizing the truth; it becomes a very important question to every consecrated one as he is brought to a knowledge of the truth how he will receive it,—appropriate it: in the picture or type those accepted of God to be Gideon's little flock, used their hands to lift the water to their mouths, a sup at a time as a dog uses his tongue to lift the water; while the others drank like as a horse who puts his mouth into the water and sucks it. The hand is a symbol of energy and we might understand this to signify that the persons most approved of the Lord will use energy and discretion in partaking of the truth—these will not bow down in the mire of human servility, but will maintain their own erectness of manhood and will partake of the water of truth, lifting their heads upward and acknowledging its heavenly origin by whatever stream or channel it may come to them.

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Many others will be associated in the work of overthrow, though theirs will be a special work as specially chosen instruments of the Lord. Now is the time for response to the call of our Captain: now is the time for standing the tests and being full of faith and confidence in the Lord, that he is able to give us the victory. Now is the time for standing the test of truth, accepting it as from the Lord and lifting our hearts in gratitude. Now is the time for understanding the will of the Captain, following his example, and imitating him and laying down our lives for the brethren, and as sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God and our reasonable service. Now is the time for the proclamation and for declaring our confidence in him who called us, who gave us the light; and very shortly will come the time for the fleeing of the enemy. Let us be faithful to our tests and opportunities, and thus be accounted worthy of a share in the service and the glory that shall follow.—Z. '02: 347-349.

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While God is both able and willing to perform His part of the contract, yet we must make sure that we co-operate in every reasonable way.—Z '15:13.

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It is our reasonable service that we cleanse not only our bodies and our words, but the very inmost thoughts of our minds.—Z. '12: 64.

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With joy we have seen the light of truth breaking, and with joy it is our privilege to view every prophetic fulfilment, whether it be in the cumulation or culmination of the troubles of this evil day; for every step of the Lord's great work brings us nearer the glorious outcome of everlasting peace not many days hence.—Z. '93:10.

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In every question of right and wrong, equity and inequity, every child of God should be a **positive** force for righteousness.—Z. '11: 44.

◇

In the day of reckoning the Lord will ignore the affairs of our lives which preceded our consecration, and will merely deal with, reckon with, judge us, according to our use or misuse of our consecrated time, influence, talents, etc. To realize these things clearly and distinctly should mean to every one of us renewed zeal and energy, and carefulness that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts, and so far as possible all of life's conduct, might testify to our faithfulness in the use of talents and opportunities entrusted to us.—Z. '06: 316.

◇

The Lord will not hold us guiltless, if, having taken his name upon us and receiving his benediction as his children, we then either sin wilfully or **in any degree** reflect dishonor upon him whose name we bear.—Z. '02: 205.

◇

The expression, "For my name's sake," is comprehensive. It includes everything connected with the Divine Plan, of which Jesus, the Messiah, is the center. It includes sufferings for the Truth's sake, because the Truth is vitally connected with the "only Name." It includes the brethren because they have named the name of Christ and they are under his name as members of his Body. It includes all the work of the Millennial Kingdom because he is the Head of it all, and his name, his honor, is associated with it all. Let us, therefore, be glad of any sufferings which come to us directly or indirectly, because of our faithfulness to the "precious name" and these various interests which are associated with it.—Z. '09: 86.

◇

After reasonable instruction in the ways of righteousness the Lord expects, and has a right to expect, strong characters. Wherefore the Apostle says, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. . . . Quit you like men, be strong." (Eph. 6:10; 1 Cor. 16:13.) We should be strong in faith and strong in character: so shall we be pleasing and acceptable to God. If weakness and indecision be a natural failing with us, we are not excusable in failing to strive against it. Some of the noblest characters are those achieved through earnest striving against inherited weaknesses. God is also always ready to supplement our efforts with his strength, if we invoke his aid.—Z. '95: 244.

◇

The way to effect the transforming of the mind, is to draw time and attention away from the earthly things in a compulsory manner, limiting the time that we will give to earthly things, and devoting more and more time to spiritual interests in our own hearts and in the hearts of our families and friends. This will mean more time for the study and practice of the truth; and as the truth comes in it will be found to be the sanctifying power of God which alone can uproot the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, and keep our hearts in the right attitude to bear much fruit to our Master's praise.—Z. '00:141.

◇

There are times when the Lord permits our financial conditions to become almost a gloomy prison as viewed from the natural standpoint,—times when responsibilities or sicknesses may shut us in as prisoners; but under such circumstances the faithful are able to realize the Lord's favor and mercy; they find many blessings to recount and their hearts overflow with thankful gratitude and praise, so that all who come in contact with them take knowledge of them, as they did of the Apostles, "that they have been with Jesus and learned of him." —Z. '97: 202.

◇

The flock of God needs constant feeding.—Z. '97:140.

God's Word gives full assurance to His children through our Lord and the Apostles, saying, "Be content with such things as ye have; for . . . I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5); "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7); "He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13); "Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9); "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy Crown."—Revelation 3:11. —Z. '17:182.

◆

To be loyal and true to God in these days requires much courage and true heroism.—Z. '92:159.

◆

Although the twelve Apostles had been for three years in very intimate association with Jesus and had been greatly benefited and blessed by the association, they had yet many things to learn, and one of the last lessons that Jesus endeavored to impress upon them was that of humility and self-forgetful service of others.—Z. '96:126.

◆

We should endeavor so to train our children that, when the trouble comes, they will be both able and willing to counsel others to righteousness and the avoidance of carnal warfare, rather than selfishly think merely of their own safety. Children should be encouraged to such stability of character, in combination with faith in God, that they will, under any stress, act up to a high conception of nobility.—Z. '96:82.

◆

Respecting present business trials: "Trust in the Lord and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed." "I have never seen the righteous forsaken (by the Lord) nor his seed begging bread." These promises are sure, and while doing good and trusting we may also rejoice. This does not imply that you will have no business trials and vexations and disappointments and discouragements. Such experiences may be just what you need, to develop your Christian character—in meekness, patience, brotherly-kindness—Love. Your meal and oil may run low, as did those of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:12-16); but God knoweth it and will provide, with spiritual blessings accompanying, if you will but trust him and do what you can do. —Z. '96:193.

◆

Few recognize the influence of the mind over the body. God has so organized our beings that pure, noble, holy thoughts in general have not only an elevating and ennobling effect upon the mental and moral constitution, but an invigorating influence upon the physical system. And, on the contrary, every unclean, ignoble, unchaste, unholy thought (as well as act) has a direct effect not only toward debasement of mind and morals, but toward the germination of seeds of disease already in the constitution of all the fallen race.

If this were more widely known and more fully recognized it would be a great blessing to very many, and would tend to prevent much sickness among both young and old, and would sometimes explain why those whose hands and brains are busiest are often the most healthy and happy. "Keep thy heart (mind, will); for out of it are the issues of life." These words should be deeply graved upon the tablet of memory by every person. They are words of wisdom. Their full import may not be recognized by many in the present time, but surely all must sooner or later learn it; for compliance with this rule is to be the arrangement by and under which, during Christ's Millennial reign, the world will be blessed.—Z. '96:180.

◆

CASTLES

Let them that would build castles in the air,
Vault thither, without step or stair:
Instead of feet to climb, take wings to fly,
And think their turrets top the sky.
But let me lay all my foundations deep,
And learn, before I run, to creep.
Who digs through rocks to lay his ground-works low,
May in good time build high and sure, though slow.

—Z. '16:15.

◆

We still require the assistances of the holy Spirit and agencies used of the Lord for the grinding and preparation of the meat in due season. By whatever means it is provided it is necessarily of the Lord's provision, and to him we render the thanks and praises and appreciation for all that has been done under the various instrumentalities of the Lord, the Apostles and others.—Z. '05:250.

◆

Oh, how necessary is the hearing of faith to the victory of faith—to that victory which makes every other love subservient to the love of God, which makes every other interest bend to the interests of his great work, and which cheerfully sacrifices every other interest to the interests which center in Christ and in his coming Kingdom. The ear of faith must be attuned to the melodies of divine truth if the soul would catch its blessed inspiration; and the eye of faith must discern the symmetry of truth and the beauty of holiness, if the soul would be filled with a burning zeal for God—for his truth and his righteousness.—Z. '96:45.

◆

The Lord is still guiding in the affairs of his Church, and still teaches us line upon line, precept upon precept, as we are able to bear the Truth, and our preparedness for it will be proportionate to our nearness and fellowship with him.—Z. '04:92.

◆

Whatever we have is of the Lord's providence; let us use it faithfully and as wisely as possible for him and his; thus our own blessings and joys will be increased as well as our favor with the Lord.—Z. '05:331.

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Jesus from the dead, so also will He raise those up who are found worthy by being faithful unto death. In raising up Jesus the Father has given us a testimony to His faithfulness. In the case of Jesus, no one had set Him an example. It was all by faith with Him; none had gone before. With us it is different. Besides, we have not so much to lose as had our Lord. However, if we trust God, He is faithful to keep us and to do what He has promised—to raise us up with our Head. Consider what great things God has done for His Son. Consider also that He has promised us a share in our Lord's glory if we be found faithful. It is amazing—almost beyond conception! Unless God had made it plain, I fear that I would not be able to receive it. If he had said it but once, I might have doubted it; but since He has stated it over and over again in so many ways as to remove all grounds for doubt, I must believe it. How wonderful it seems!

Consider Him! Consider that God has highly exalted Him! Consider what a great privilege has been afforded us of walking in His footsteps, especially as our lives are so imperfect, so unsatisfactory even to ourselves, and as life is all that we have to give. . . . Then to think that we are in the last time **now!** We are right at the close of the Age. The New Dispensation is opening all around us, and the great majority of the people are so bewildered that they do not know what to make of the wonderful things of our day. "None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." (Daniel 12:10.) The Lord's true people are the only ones who have a correct understanding of these things.

How careful the people of God, therefore, should weigh their thoughts and deeds! "Seeing that these [present] things are to be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy living and godliness,** looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the Day of God! . . . According to His promise we look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless" in His sight. "Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."
—2 Peter 3:13-18.

Closing Exhortation

In view of what we see ahead of us as sharers with Jesus of His glory and honor, we should be leading holy lives. We should be living in the future rather than in the past. Do not think too much of the past. Let us not live in the past and dwell upon our mistakes and shortcomings, and thus be cast down; but let us believe that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9.) And we should have such an appreciation of these mercies and blessings of forgiveness as to show it forth in our conduct.

Let us give heed more and more to the suggestion of our text, and consider Him whom the Father has so greatly exalted—so highly exalted. . . . Then we shall cease to be weary and faint and shall become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might; we shall go on from grace to grace, from glory to glory; we shall be transformed by the renewing of our minds, more and more proving what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Then, finally, we shall attain unto the glorious things which He has in reservation for those who love Him more than parents, or children, or self, or any other person or thing.

> "Hold on thy way with hope unchilled,
> By faith and not by sight;
> And thou shalt own His Word fulfilled—
> 'At eve it shall be light.'"
> —Z. '17:99-101.

KERNELS KERNELS KERNELS

How great stress the Lord lays everywhere upon the exercise of faith in the **Divine Power!** "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Those who cannot exercise the faith cannot have the blessing which others may have who do exercise faith; and our blessings increase in proportion as we will exercise our faith. Thus the Lord puts a premium upon this element of character, and makes it essential to His favor.—Z. '12:345.

◆

The Lord is ever present with his people. He is always thinking of us, looking out for our interests, guarding us in danger, providing for us in temporal and spiritual things, reading our hearts, marking every impulse of loving devotion to him, shaping the influences around us for our discipline and refining, and hearkening to our faintest call for aid or sympathy or fellowship with him. He is never for a moment off guard, whether we call to him in the busy noon hours or in the silent watches of the night. And not only is the Lord Jesus thus present, but the Father also. How blessed the realization of such abiding faithfulness! And no real child of God is devoid of this evidence of his adoption. Sometimes it is more manifest than at others; as, for instance, when some special trial of faith or patience or endurance necessitates the special call for special help, and forthwith comes the grace sufficient with a precious realization of its loving source. Thus

> "E'en sorrow, touched by heaven, grows bright,
> With more than rapture's ray,
> As darkness shows us worlds of light
> We never saw by day."

Every true child of God has these precious evidences of sonship, and the roughest places in his pathway are so illuminated with divine grace that they become the brightest, and memory continues to refer to them with thankfulness: and faith and hope and love grow strong and inspiring.—Z. '03:376, 377.

◆

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." (Psa. 19:7-9.) How true are these prophetic declarations may be comprehended only by those who have learned to appreciate the Word of God. It deters from sin, it encourages toward righteousness, it gives consolation in trouble, it gives strength and courage in a time of general fear and quaking, it gives wisdom in times of perplexity, and the result is that the people of the Lord have much advantage every way through it as respects the present life, besides the hope, the encouragement and the preparation which it gives for the life which is to come.—Z. '05:238.

◆

We must distinguish between the overcoming of Jesus and that of His followers. His was a perfect overcoming. While He had the instruction of the Father and the help of the angels, He had no one as a sin-bearer, no one to impute any righteousness to Him. His overcoming was full and complete. His followers, being imperfect in the flesh, cannot do perfectly; and therefore by the grace of God it has been so arranged that these may be acceptable through Jesus, if they have the spirit to overcome, the desire to overcome—if they manifest righteousness of heart. But they must show this overcoming spirit, else they can never be associated with our Lord in His Kingdom. They must be copies of their Master in spirit, even though imperfect in the flesh.—Z. '14:11.

heart

◆

The Lord will see our endeavor, our strenuous fighting to put off the old nature, to put off "the works of the flesh" and to be clothed with the garments of righteousness suitable to our relationship to Him, and our success will be proportionate to our attainment of the mind, or disposition of Christ—holy conformity to the will of the Father in all things. How comforting in this connection is the promise of our Lord, that our "Heavenly Father is more willing to give His Holy Spirit (the Spirit of holiness, the Spirit of wisdom) to them that ask Him than are earthly parents to give good gifts unto their children."—Luke 11:13.—Z. '12:179.

◆

REST IN GOD'S WILL

How sweet to feel God's will is best,
  And in this precious thought to rest;
To know, whatever may betide,
  'Tis best, for He is by our side!
        —Z. '09:296.

◆

The Lord guards the penitent. A bruised reed he will not break, and smoking flax he will not quench. (Isa. 42:3.) If there be even a slight disposition to penitence, he fosters and cherishes it.—Z. '94:29.

Could we but keep ever before our minds the thought that we are on trial now, being tested, that we are being given opportunity to prove the sincerity and depth of our consecration to the Lord and to righteousness, the effect would surely be to spur us and energize us in the ways of the Lord. Let us remember, then, that this keeping under of the body appertains to our food as well as to our drink, to our thoughts as well as to our speech. Indeed all the difficulties with which we are obliged to contend begin in our thoughts, and by these, therefore, are we properly and justly measured by the Lord, who judges us not according to the imperfections of the flesh, which we have inherited, but according to our new minds, our new intentions, our new wills, our new hearts, and the energy and activity which these put forth in the keeping of the mortal body in subjection to the spirit, and so far as possible to the letter of the divine requirement.—Z. '06:362.

◆

Though storms and shakings may, while being experienced, seem very disastrous, we feel sure that the Lord will not forget his own, as it is written, "The Lord knoweth them that are his." We may be sure that he will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able—that if they see to it that their hearts are loyal to him such experiences will not work them injury but really benefit, for are not all the Lord's people to be "overcomers"? and is it not by the "trial of their faith" that they are to be tested and proved? and is it not for this reason that the Lord permits such shakings? And are not the brethren the stronger after [illegible] have passed through such an experience and reached the further side in safety? Are they not the more reliant upon the Lord and the power of his might? And will they not more closely watch, not only to keep their own garments unspotted, but to assist all the Lord's dear flock who may be in any danger or trouble through their own weaknesses or those of others?—Z. '06:389.

◆

Obedience to the Divine will is paramount **every way,** and holy privileges of the Church in spiritual matters must not be bartered for earthly advantage. The wrong course is symbolically prefigured in Esau's selling his birthright for a mess of pottage. (Heb. 12:16.) Every temptation to sacrifice spiritual privileges or violate spiritual responsibilities for the attainment of earthly advantages would be a yielding to this form of temptation.—Z. '10:9.

◆

Since his glorification the Lamb has been breaking the seven seals and thus opening the divine plan before men and angels, and we now living are privileged to share this knowledge more abundantly than others,—because, the last seal having bee broken, the scroll is open to all who follow [illegible] Lamb in love and obedience and meekness; and "the mystery of God is finished."—Rev. 10:7.—Z. '97:151.

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Old Corn Gems

No. 123

"And they did eat of the OLD CORN of the land on the morrow after the Passover . . . and the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the OLD CORN of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." Joshua 5:11-12.

A SAFE RULE

"WHERE A BROTHER GIVES AN INTERPRETATION OF A SCRIPTURE WHICH DIFFERS FROM THAT GIVEN BY BROTHER RUSSELL, AND BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION SEEMS REASONABLE AND IN HARMONY WITH THE PLAN OF GOD, THEN WE BELIEVE IT A SAFE RULE TO FOLLOW BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION, FOR THE REASON THAT HE IS THE SERVANT OF THE CHURCH, SO CONSTITUTED BY THE LORD FOR THE LAODICEAN PERIOD; AND THEREFORE WE SHOULD EXPECT THE LORD TO TEACH US THROUGH HIM. WHERE THERE ARISES A DOUBT IN THE MIND AS TO WHICH INTERPRETATION IS CORRECT, THEN IT IS ALWAYS SAFER TO RESOLVE THAT DOUBT IN FAVOR OF BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION. WE BELIEVE SUCH TO BE IN HARMONY WITH THE LORD'S WILL."—Z. '18:51.

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When Christ Is King---What Then?

WHEN our Redeemer shall have taken to himself his great power and established his Kingdom,—after the last member of "the Church which is his body" shall have been perfected and glorified with the Head upon the throne (Rev. 11:17; 3:21),—after the great "time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation" shall have swept away present institutions and humbled the pride of man in the dust and brought the world into a teachable attitude, then the Broad-road to death will be abolished and instead the way to death (Second Death) thereafter will be hedged about and made narrow and difficult, by reason of the speedy and just **retribution** which then will promptly follow every attempted violation of Immanuel's laws. The Narrow way to immortal life will also have terminated, having served its purpose by selecting the "little flock," the "Royal Priesthood," through persecution for godliness and fierce oppositions from the world, the flesh and the devil. Then Satan will be "bound" (restrained from deceiving mankind) and "the world" will be forced to respect at least outwardly the laws and Kingdom of God. The "flesh," the weaknesses men labor under as the result of the fall, will alone stand between men and perfect happiness,—and full arrangements are provided by the Mediator-King for assisting the fallen flesh back to perfection. The way of life will then be a Highway, cleared of every impediment—the Highway of Holiness.

The various arrangements of the Millennial Kingdom will at first make the road to death difficult (to insure that only the wilful shall go by it into the Second Death); and the same Kingdom arrangements will make the way to life easy of access. Its gate of faithful obedience will be clearly seen and easily accessible to all; and its name correspondingly will no longer be the Narrow way, but the King's Highway of Holiness, leading to life everlasting, and open to all who desire righteousness.—John 10:16.

As the Prince of Darkness (Satan) rules now over the Broad Road and its blinded millions whom he leads **downward** to death, so there the Prince of Light (Christ, head and body) will rule over mankind, for whom he will open up the Highway of Holiness, upon which millions will go **upward** to Life eternal. It is as a means to this end that he has selected his Church, and is causing the great trouble to come upon the world. And, more than this, he will open the blinded eyes that **all may see** the light of the knowledge of the goodness of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord.—2 Cor. 4:6.

When Satan no longer has power to deceive men and to put good for evil and evil for good; when the eyes of their understandings have been opened to see and appreciate "the True Light,"—until "every man that cometh into the world" has been thus enlightened (John 1:9; 1 Tim. 2:6); when the knowledge of the Lord fills the whole earth as the waters cover the depths of the sea (all **covered,** but some more deeply than others); when there shall no longer be necessity to teach, every man his neighbor, saying, "Know the Lord," because **all** shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest (Jer. 31:34); when the Lord's Kingdom shall have come and his will is done on earth **as** it is done in heaven—instead of the message of the gospel being limited to a few, all will know the plan of God; and the evidences of its truth will be so clear and convincing that none will have excuse for disbelief; for the conditions will be such that doubt would be more difficult than is belief at present. Nevertheless a personal acceptance of "the way" (Christ) and of the conditions of the New Covenant will be required of each individual thus enlightened.

Not only will men learn unquestionably that Christ died for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; but more, they will **see** and feel the restitution work begun, in themselves and in their fellows. (Acts 3:19-21; Ezek. 16:48-50, 53-55, 60-63.) They will see Righteousness ruling the world **unto** or toward Life, instead of as now Sin reigning and all of its influences tending **unto** death. They will see great changes in the climate of the earth because "he that hath the power of death, that is the devil" (Heb. 2:14), will no longer be "the prince [ruler] of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2), and "the wilderness and the solitary place shall rejoice" and "the earth shall yield her **increase**" (Isa. 35; Ezek. 34:27); for the microbes of destruction and disease shall be restrained and "nothing shall hurt nor destroy" in all God's holy Kingdom.—Isa. 11:9.

Sickness and pain and all diseases will yield to the power of the Great Physician upon the throne; and he will not permit death to befall any except those who shall intelligently and wilfully refuse his offers of full restitution, by rejecting the terms of obedience required under the New Covenant then open to all. And even these shall be liberally dealt with; for our Lord willeth not the death of him that dieth, but would rather that all should turn unto him and live. Accordingly, while all will be forced to "bow," in at least outward recognition of that Kingdom, and to "confess" it a blessed improvement upon the reign of Sin unto death (Rom. 5:21; 1 Cor. 15:26), yet their **will** must remain their own and their progress in restitution beyond the common advantages will depend upon their willingness or unwillingness to come into accord with that Kingdom and its righteous arrangements. Concerning these we are expressly told by the Prophet, that if still sinners when a hundred years old they will be cut off (in the Second Death—**destruction**—from which there is to be no ransom and no resurrection); but that to die at that age, then, would be like a death in infancy now;—because the smoking flax he will not quench, nor break the bruised reed; and all who shall then show any evidence of love and consecration to the Lord may continue to enjoy the Kingdom blessings at least until the close of that Millennial age.—Isa. 65:20.

As the Lord now sends seed-time and harvest, sun and rain, upon the just and unjust, so then, to a certain extent (i.e., for one hundred years each), the restitution blessings, that is, the equitable laws and other public arrangements for the education and uplifting of the masses, and the climatic conditions more favorable to health, will be common to all men. But, although plenteous in mercy, the Lord "will not [continue] always [to] chide [correct]; he will not keep [hold back] his anger [his righteous indignation against wilful sin and sinners] forever." "Every soul which will not hear [obey] that Prophet [Teacher] shall be destroyed from among the people."—Act 3:23.

But although the condition of things in the Millennial age will differ greatly from present conditions so as to be almost the reverse, yet the laws of God, like himself, change not: it is merely the conditions that will have changed. God's law, when exercised by our Lord Jesus and his Church ("Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" 1 Cor. 6:2), and tempered with mercy (because of man's fallen condition for which as Redeemer our Lord paid the price in his own death) will be the same law in every particular that it always has been. It cannot change, for the same reason that God himself cannot change;—because it is **perfect**, and to change it in any degree would be to make it imperfect.

That law is love. Full obedience to it means perfect love—controlling every thought, word and deed; partial obedience means a measure of love. At the beginning of that new era the world in general will be loveless as at present—controlled instead by selfishness; for the heart of the natural [fallen] man is enmity against this law of God which represents God's character. When present-day selfishness shall have blossomed and gone to seed in the great time of trouble, it will become apparent to all that, however selfish their hearts may be, their deeds must thereafter conform more closely to the principle of love—doing to others as they would have others do to them. It will thus be with a **practical** lesson that the new King will introduce the Law of his Kingdom. Then loving deeds and words will be made compulsory upon all, though their hearts (wills) may still be tainted with selfishness; for God does not now, and never will, force the wills of his creatures. But those who at the end of the hundred years' of trial remain obstinate in heart, and only obedient outwardly, under compulsion, shall be judged hopeless "sinners," and will be cut off from all further trial for life; for the principle will still hold that, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."—1 John 3:36.

"In that day" an **intellectual** unbelief in Christ and the offer of salvation will be an impossibility (Isa. 11:9); for "even the devils believe and tremble"; but belief, in the sense of acceptance of Christ as the Lord who **bought** us, and hearty obedience to the letter and spirit of his requirements, will be the condition upon which any may obtain everlasting life—provided and intended only for those who **love God**; which implies a love of his character and his laws.—Isa. 47:14-21.

But perfect love and obedience in letter and spirit will not be realized by the world then on trial, until the close of the Millennial age; for perfection of being is necessary to a perfection of obedience; and that entire age will be necessary to the full restitution or bringing back of such as accept the Son to the perfection and divine fellowship lost six thousand years ago. And as from the first moment of the death-sentence Adam and the race were no longer fully alive, but dying, so, although the reign or Kingdom of Life will continue during the entire age to lift the obedient out of death toward life, yet perfection of life will not be attained until the end of the process of uplifting or restitution; and none will get that grand gift of God except such as are **perfected** in love—not only in word and deed, but also in the very deepest thoughts and intents of their hearts. Such as thus believe the Son, accept of his grace and are conformed to his image, and such only, shall see **life**, in the full and absolute sense, and be presented unto the Father perfect and unreprovable in love, when Christ shall deliver up the Kingdom, having thus accomplished the work begun by him nearly three thousand years before, when he bought the world with his own life, that he might give life unto all them that obey him.

But while the giving of everlasting life to the worthy ones of the world will be at the close of the Millennial age, and in the nature of a reward of obedience in the school of Christ, in fashioning themselves after the pattern of the Redeemer's character, yet that everlasting life will be **reckoned** to each one who accepts of Christ and comes to any degree of heart-harmony with his requirements, from the moment that he thus accepts the terms of the New Covenant.

The various temperaments and various degrees of degradation of fallen men guarantee that their hearty acceptance of Christ and his regulations for their blessing will differ, as is now the case with those who come to the knowledge of the truth. Some will respond quickly, some slowly, some not at all. But the Lord's provision, that all shall have at least a hundred years of opportunity under the clear light of "the Sun of Righteousness" (Mal. 4:2; Luke 1:78, 79), guarantees against the loss of any for whom there could be any hope that they would develop characters fit for an eternity of fellowship with God. Nor will it be merely those who promptly and fully accept the Lord that will be continued beyond the first hundred years of trial, for we are assured that "the bruised reed he will not break, and smoking flax he will not quench." That is, if there is any tendency to hold on, to appreciate and to make use of the divine favors, if there is even a smouldering spark of love toward God and righteousness, the Lord will not break off such a one, but will fan the spark if perchance it might become a blaze of love which would purify the heart and eventually bring every thought into captivity to the will of God. He will pursue this course until "he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."—Isa. 42:3.

Those who most quickly and most fully accept the new conditions will more quickly and more fully taste the joys of salvation and the Lord's favor, and have the peace of God rule in their hearts. Thus the measure of "light" sinned against in the present life determines not only the amount of heart-hardening, but also the time and the amount of difficulty the person will experience in getting his heart softened again.*

Those who will be "cut off" during the Millennium will be such as when given full opportunity to enter upon the King's Highway of Holiness will refuse to "go up thereon." Satan's Broad Road of the present time is a downward one, but the King's Highway in the Millennium will have an upward grade. Now, men can go downward to death almost without effort; but to reach the prize of life at the end of the Highway will require effort. That "Highway," however, will require less effort and overcoming than does the "Narrowway" of the present age. It will be less steep, for several centuries may be had for gradually developing character in likeness to the Lord's, whereas now the development must be effected in much less time to constitute the pilgrim an "overcomer" and a worthy associate with the Lord. Now, there are "stumbling-stones" to faith in the "Narrowway," to test the faithful in trust and endurance, and there are "lions" of opposition to threaten, and to turn back discouraged, all except the "peculiar" people whom the Lord is now selecting for the peculiar work of the future; but of the King's Highway it is declared, "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast"; and the stumbling-stones shall all be gathered out, and mountains of difficulty shall be leveled, and valleys of despair and discouragement shall be filled up, that the King's Highway may be most favorable;—that all the Redeemed of the Lord (who will accept the gift of life upon the conditions of its offer) may go up thereon to perfection.—Isa. 35:8-10; 62:10; 40:4, 5.

It must not, however, be supposed that progress along that easy "Highway," with everything to aid in the development of character, and with nothing like opposition or temptation to test its strength, would be sufficient evidence of heart-loyalty to God and his laws to prove that all who will reach the end of that age, are worthy of everlasting life; even though in the use of its elixirs of life,—its pure air, nutritious foods, inspired skill and conformity to its divine laws and regulations — they shall have attained human perfection,—physical, mental and moral.

The testings of the present "Narrowway" are step by step; but the testings of the King's Highway will be specially two—at the beginning and at the end: first, as to who will start to go upward on it and keep on going upward; and finally a test of all who shall have gone up that Highway to its farther end—to the end of the Millennium. Such will then be tested or proved as to their fitness for everlasting life. (1) Those who, when all the conditions of knowledge and obedience are so favorable (as God has promised they shall be—so that the conditions in general shall make the road to life a Highway), will make no effort upward will be cut off after one hundred years of opportunity and testings and reproof, as unworthy of further testing or further Millennial privileges. (Isa. 65:20.) (2) The object of the test of those who shall have gone up the Highway to its farther end will not be to prove which are sinners, either open or covert; for none of them will be transgressors of God's law, the evil doers having been cut off long before, at the end of a hundred years trial; and no doubt it will surprise many of them when they learn that God has purposed their trial at all. What! Test those who for hundreds of years have been living in harmony with God's law, and constantly blessed by it? Are not those centuries of obedience a sufficient proof of loyalty to God? Can any further test be required? And if so, for what purpose?

We answer that their obedience for centuries had its corresponding reward of blessings and enjoyments experienced during those centuries. They are still God's debtors. God does not owe them everlasting life. Everlasting life is a gift of God through Christ: it is one of the things, however, prepared for those who love God, and the test at the end of the Millennial age will be a test of love;—to prove the degree of love and consecration that has been developed as a character in those who have seen and enjoyed so many of God's favors. Not outward perfection merely, but inward perfection will be the test; and that some who will have reached outward perfection will not have developed the inward perfection of heart or will, even with every favorable opportunity, is evident from the results of the test. (Rev. 20:9.) So, too, Adam was perfect before his trial in Eden, but he had not developed a consecrated will or character fully submitted to the Lord. Satan was perfect as an angel of God, but he developed a character or will antagonistic to God's. And God's purpose is that the trial or judgment both of angels and men shall be so thorough, so complete, that not a single creature who is not in absolute heart-harmony with God and his laws shall receive everlasting life and pass into the ages of eternity beyond the Millennium. All not possessed of characters (wills) in full, absolute harmony with God's will, must die the Second Death. And yet they will have enjoyed much, and will have much for which to be thankful.

In no other way could the Lord continue his creatures in his own likeness as free moral agents, and yet guarantee that when the Millennial reign of Christ shall have caused the former things of sin to pass away, "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

Praise God for the lengths and breadths of his great and gracious plan of salvation through Christ;—for the Narrow way of the present with its severe trials and temptations and its great prize of life in joint-heirship with our Lord the Redeemer; and praise him too for the great Highway of Holiness which by and by shall be prepared and opened by the Christ to all the redeemed, that whosoever will, may not perish, but have the gift of God, eternal life.

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* See "The Retributive Character of Divine Law," O.C.G. 122.

The test at the close of the Millennium is **symbolically** represented in Rev. 20:7-10. Satan will be permitted to attempt to deceive **all**, whose number will then be as the sand, but what proportion he will succeed in leading astray is not stated.

The Lord's Word does not indicate the nature of the movement, but we do not suppose that Satan and his followers will go up and surround the beloved city (the capital of the earthly phase of the Kingdom) with any thought of war, or with intent to use physical force. They could not be so foolish, after so long an experience with the power of God's Kingdom. We surmise that they will err in their calculation of when the thousand years of Christ's autocratic Kingdom will end, and when the dominion of earth will be restored to **mankind** in general to be exercised as a Republic—in full harmony with the divine law. Miscalculating the time, they may feel that the rulers of that time (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets) are prolonging their rule unwarrantedly. And the surrounding of the beloved city may signify a "demonstration," or appeal for their rights, such as has often been made by present-day workmen — surrounding Parliament or council chambers with remonstrances against infringements of their claimed rights. Such peaceful remonstrances in the present time against wrongs or oppressions are not sins, but such a demonstration on the part of perfect men after centuries of benefits and blessings at God's hands would indicate that their **hearts** were not fully submitted to the Lord; for the right hearted would say to such an invitation,—No: we may have been mistaken in our understanding of the Lord's word, or in our calculations of the time;—but if God sees best to continue us as "servants" rather than to grant us the full liberties and privileges of "sons" (Rom. 8:21), we will trust the wisdom, love and power which have so abundantly provided for us thus far—even while we were yet sinners—and will not even harbor in our hearts a wish to change any of the Lord's arrangements, much less would we join in any demonstration or protest against the Lord's arrangements.

Only those who under such a test would manifest **heart-harmony** with God are of the class for whom everlasting life has been prepared as a gift of God. Such will be received and blessed after the test; but the others will be cut off in the second death.. If it be objected that these committed no great crime, we answer, neither was the transgression of the perfect Adam a gross crime; but the eating of the forbidden fruit was a disobedience; and disobedience and transgression on the part of **perfect** beings is a just cause for a refusal to grant such the great boon of life everlasting.—Z. '95:43-46.

"The Gifts and Callings of God"

Genesis 12:1-8.

Golden Text:—"I will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing."

OUR lesson relates to the call of Abram (high father), whom God renamed Abraham (father of a multitude), although indirectly the special point of the lesson refers to the calling of Abraham's seed, natural and spiritual, and the divine bestowments to them, constituting them the centers of hope to the world of mankind. Already they have been greatly used of the Lord, but the Scriptures indicate that their influence and usefulness toward their fellow-creatures have only begun, and will reach their glorious culmination during the Millennium. Abraham's early life was spent at Ur of Chaldea, the ruins of which (now known by the name of Mugheir) are being excavated and explored. They indicate that it was once a seat of business activity, and Professor Sayce says that the name Abram (Abu-Ramu) is found on early Babylonian contract tablets, and some tablets unearthed at Ur contain part of the story of the deluge. . . .

The Reign of Sin

The indications are that idolatry and immorality had taken firm hold upon that branch of Noah's family (Shem), of which Abraham came. The assumption is not unreasonable, therefore, that Abraham's father, Terah, and his two elder brothers, Haran and Nahor, were considerably influenced by this spirit of idolatry. The record is that God first communicated with Abram while he resided at Ur, indicating the propriety of a change of residence to Canaan. Apparently he had considerable influence with the family, so that they all removed from Ur, a distance of about six hundred miles northward to Haran, possibly a place of their own establishment and named after Terah's eldest son, who died about that time.

Whether it was God's revelation to Abraham or the death of his son Haran that influenced Terah and the family to remove from Ur we cannot know — possibly both incidents had their influence. However, it was not God's design to call Abraham's entire family but merely himself. Hence, apparently with the Lord's approval, Abraham remained in Haran for five years, until the death of Terah. Then, with his share of the property, with his wife Sarah, who was also his half sister, and with Lot, the son of his deceased brother Haran, Abraham carried out the divine arrangement by removing from Haran into the land of Canaan, a journey of about three hundred miles more. The clear intimation of the Scriptures is that in this matter Abraham acted in harmony with God's directions, along the lines of faith and obedience. We may infer that this obedience was rendered at the cost of earthly name and fame, and that Abraham must have been out of accord with the idolatry and licentiousness and immorality of his native place, as well as full of faith in God and fully in harmony with the divine principles of righteousness, and glad to be obedient to the Lord.

Abraham Was Wealthy and Powerful

A lesson for us here is, God first, righteousness first — before earthly prosperity, especially that which might be obtained through evil methods or other fellowship with the unrighteous. True, as the Apostle says, to have no dealings with the unrighteous might imply that we need to go out of the world, since unrighteousness is so prevalent; but as in Abraham's case the Lord's invitation to us is to separate ourselves as much as possible from people and circumstances and conditions whose tendency is downward toward sin, and to affiliate ourselves as much as possible with those influences which would help us to a closer walk with God. Although Abraham had no children he had a large number of persons under his care. These were his servants, and how numerous they were may be judged from the fact that a little later Abraham was able to muster 318 fighting men amongst them—the company who went after those who had taken Lot's property. This number of fighting men would imply a considerably larger number in the aggregate. It would appear, therefore, that Abraham was a very powerful sheik or prince of that time, the number of whose flocks and herds, requiring so many servants, must have been large indeed. No wonder his servant was able to tell Rebecca that Abraham was very rich. Much of those riches, of course, was gained in Canaan, but a considerable portion of it evidently went with him into Canaan.

Further Separation From Idolatry

When Abraham and his company had come into the land of Canaan under the Lord's direction, he settled for awhile at Shechem, that portion subsequently known as Samaria. But he did not remain there long, for, as we read, the Canaanite was still in the land. It was doubtless to be free from the immoral influences of the Canaanites, and to have his people separated from these, that Abraham removed subsequently to the mountainous country near Bethel. There he established his home, there he reared an altar to the Lord and prayed. Would that each head of a family were thus careful to look out for the interests of those under his charge, that these interests should be advantageous to their welfare everywhere! Would that more could realize how indispensable it is to have an altar to the Lord in their home, where the prayer incense would ascend to the Father through the merit of the Redeemer. The true altar not having been provided of the Lord, Abraham and others of his time reared altars of stone for use in the Lord's worship. . . .

The Divine Promise

Whenever God calls any for any purpose he sets before the called ones an object, a reason, a motive, and this he did with Abraham. He not only called him out of his own country to a life of separation from sin, but he attached to that a great promise, which had a mighty influence upon the mind of Abraham and his children and all the Jewish nation, and since then upon all the spiritual Israelites, the Israelites indeed. The promise was that not only would Abraham receive a blessing, but that in and through him "all the families of the earth shall be blessed." This must have seemed a very obscure promise to Abraham, and his obedience to it was the more remarkable, so that he is held up to be as an example of a proper unquestioning faith in the word and wisdom of the Almighty—"Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." He might have objected that he could do more good in Ur, where wickedness prevailed, than he could accomplish in the mountains of Palestine, where he and others under his godly influence were comparatively separate from others of the world. His faith was shown in that he did not attempt to argue the matter with the Lord, but obeyed implicitly. So it is with many of God's spiritual Israel of the present time: the call of the Lord comes, and his direction of word and providence seems perhaps from our standpoint to be not in harmony with out anticipations respecting his will and the attainment of his purposes.

And alas! how few take Abraham's course and get Abraham's blessing. The obedient are only "a little flock," to whom it will be the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom and its great work of blessing all the families of the earth. Many of them are inclined to resist God's providences, not exercising a sufficiency of faith. . . .

"This Is the Way, Walk Ye in It"

The spiritual lesson in the story of Abraham is that God is pleased to honor faith, and that the experiences of life which he permits to come to the faithful are intended for their development in faith and in the graces of the holy Spirit, and that these all are unitedly a preparation for God's still greater work of the future.

Abraham was not sent as a missionary back to Haran or to Ur, nor indeed to the people who surrounded him. The Lord's message was, "Walk thou before me and be thou perfect." God, of course, knew that Abraham was actually imperfect, tainted by the fall, and this command, therefore, signified that his heart should be perfect—his will, his intentions, and his conduct as nearly as possible in harmony with God's perfect will. The Apostle Paul shows us that he was not justified on account of any righteousness of his own, for he puts Abraham with the list of ancient worthies who were justified not by the works of the Law but by faith, and who, because of their faith, "had this testimony that they pleased God." It was his faith that led Abraham into a strange country away from his kindred, because he trusted God; it was faith that enabled him to stand various tests by the way, including the command to offer up his son as a sacrifice, his only son, in whom centered all the promises.

It was his faith in the promise of God—that in a future time through his seed a reign of righteousness would be established in the earth—that led Abraham to look for that city [government] of sure foundation upon principles of righteousness—the heavenly city, the government or kingdom of God's dear Son, which is to put down all insubordination and bring everything into subjection to the divine will. The seed of Abraham, the elect Church of this Gospel age, is to exercise divine power in the earth and cause every knee to bow and every tongue to confess; and after instituting a reign of righteousness and blessings thereby to all the families of the earth, is to deliver up the Kingdom, perfect and complete, to God, even the Father, at the close of the Millennial age. This was the promise made to Abraham, "In thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." And he was willing to waive his share in the governmental position and power of the present time under present adverse conditions, that he might have some share in the glorious Messianic Kingdom of the future.

"Ye Shall See Abraham, Isaac and Jacob"

When Messiah's Kingdom, itself invisible, shall establish a reign of righteousness in the earth, it will have amongst men visible representatives, "princes in the earth." (Psa. 45:16.) And we are assured that Abraham will be one of these, and will thus have to do actively, prominently, with the establishment of the reign of righteousness and the demonstrations of justice and mercy and love to the world of mankind, "to all the families of the earth." He is mentioned as one of this class in Hebrews 11:39, 40. At one time, in company with others, we surmised that Abraham would have been placed in the heavenly Kingdom of the spiritual class; but a more careful consideration of the matter shows us, to the contrary, that he belongs to the class of ancient worthies of whom the Apostle declares that God has provided some better thing for us than for them, although their blessing shall be a great one. Abraham, styled the father of the faithful, the Redeemer says, "rejoiced to see my day; and saw it and was glad." (John 8:56.) By faith he saw the day of Christ, the Millennial day, the Kingdom well founded; by faith he rejoiced in the glorious reign of righteousness then to be established.

But while this blessing is to come to the world through the seed of Abraham, the Scriptures indicate that a great change takes place by which the seed, the child of Abraham, Christ, becomes greater than Abraham, as it is written, "Instead of the fathers shall be the children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth." Abraham, instead of being viewed any longer as the father of Messiah, will be recognized as one of his children, perfect on the earthly plane and made a prince amongst men, to be used as an active agent of the glorified Christ in dispensing the blessings secured by the great redemptive sacrifice. Referring to the matter, our Lord points out the fact that these ancient worthies will be visible to men, but properly enough says not a word about himself and the apostles or any of the Bride class being visible. The statement is, "Ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets." The fact that the still more notable ones in the Kingdom are not referred to as seen is an evidence that they will not be seen by the world, and this comports with the Lord's statement to some in his day, "Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more." . . .

As the trial of faith was the most prominent feature of Abraham's testing, so it must needs be with us, his true children. It is the trial of your faith that is much more precious than gold, as the Apostle says, and he assures us that "without faith it is impossible to please God." For this reason it is required of those who now walk in the narrow way that they shall walk by faith and not by sight. When the time comes for the shining forth of the Sun of Righteousness and the scattering of the darkness and mystery that surrounds the divine character and word and the permission of evil, there will be plenty ready and able to walk by sight; but the Lord is now looking for the few, able and willing to walk by faith, through evil report and good report, to trust him where they cannot trace him, and to demonstrate their loyalty by their faithfulness and their endurance even unto death. The trials of the present time are with a view to testing the character, with a view to determining who are worthy and who are unworthy to constitute the seed of Abraham, which God promised shall ultimately bless all the families of the earth. —Z. '07:41-44.

Songs in the House of Our Pilgrimage

"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."—Psa. 119:54.

GOD'S people during the Jewish dispensation as well as during the Gospel dispensation are spoken of as "pilgrims and strangers" in the "present evil world." They are such, because they have heard of "a better country," whose ruler is God, and whose law is love—"the perfect law of liberty." To such pilgrims the strife for wealth and vain-glory, the pride, haughtiness and tinsel that everywhere prevail now, are distasteful; while the battle for wealth or position, especially when it leads to unrighteousness, oppression, slander, envy, strife and every evil work, is repulsive. Having obtained a glimpse of the perfection of divine character with its absoluteness of justice and love, it has become their ideal: and they have heard "the voice of him that speaketh from heaven," instructing them that sin and evil shall not always prevail, but that the God of heaven by and by shall set up his Kingdom which will renovate and bless the world of mankind, and bring in everlasting righteousness. Since they have heard this, and the more they learn to appreciate it, the more, necessarily, they are out of harmony with the contrary conditions of the present time. Hence it is that they feel themselves, and are portrayed in the Scriptures as being, pilgrims and strangers who seek the fairer clime of the coming age.

It was in this view of matters that the Apostle declared that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were "pilgrims and strangers on the earth," who sought a better country, a home under more righteous conditions. They sojourned in the very land promised to them, but it was not their "home"; because it was still in the hands and under the government of those who were aliens and strangers from God. They waited for the fulfilment of God's promise to give them that country under his divine blessing and laws, when it would become to them a heavenly country, a country under heavenly direction and blessing. They were obliged to wait for two reasons: first, as a test and development of their own faith and trust in the Great Promiser; and secondly, because "the wickedness of the Amorites was not yet come to the full."—Gen. 15:16.

Commenting on this, the Apostle declares that if they had been mindful, i.e., wishful, to have returned to Charran, their own country prior to the promise of Canaan, they might have returned to it, — when they found the land of promise still occupied by other peoples, and that God was **not yet ready to fulfil** to them his promises. (Heb. 11:15.) But they preferred to hold on to God's promises, and chose accordingly, for the time, to be pilgrims and strangers in the land of promise. Stephen in his discourse (Acts 7:2, 5) points out this pilgrimage and sojourn, as strangers, of Abraham and his seed—waiting for possession of the promised land. Stephen says, "God gave him none inheritance in it: no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he **would give it to** him for a possession, and to his seed after him."

We are to understand, accordingly, that the heavenly country for which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the faithful of the fleshly house of Israel waited as "pilgrims and strangers" is after all to be earthly, in the sense of being **on the earth**; but it will be heavenly in the sense that its government, regulations, laws, etc., will be heavenly laws, etc.,—and not "earthly, sensual, devilish." Consequently, when the Apostle says that they "looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God"; and that God "hath prepared for them a city," we must understand this promise, so far as they are concerned, to be in harmony with the other promises made to fleshly Israel.

The "city" referred to is not a literal city, but the symbolical one mentioned in Rev. 21:2, 9-27. In symbol a city signifies a government, and this city which comes down from God out of heaven symbolizes the Kingdom of God, his rule or government, which will be established in all the earth. This "city" or government will consist of The Christ — the "Bridegroom" and "the bride the Lamb's wife." "Then shall the righteous shine forth"—the city will have the glory of God. When this Kingdom is established, the nations* shall walk in the light of it.—Rev. 21:24.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the faithful pilgrims and strangers prior to the atonement, while they will not be members of the bride company nor of the new Jerusalem, the Kingdom, will nevertheless be very closely identified with it in the work of blessing the world of mankind in general. And hence it is that they are represented as waiting for this "city," this government which God will establish in the world; preferring to have their inheritance at that time, and under the blessing and bright illumination of that heavenly city or government, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. It is in harmony with this thought that we are taught to pray, "Thy Kingdom [the Heavenly Jerusalem, the city which hath for foundations the twelve Apostles—Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone] come! Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." This city will shine and bless the world until all the **willing** shall be helped and reconciled to God. Its reign will be for a thousand years, after which a new dispensation will open, under new conditions, in which mankind (perfected) will be granted the privilege of ruling themselves in harmony with the divine law.

In a certain sense then we might designate the present era, "the present evil world," to be the general house of our pilgrimage for all who love and long for righteousness; and the better condition of the future, the "new heavens and the new earth" promised as the heavenly home or condition which will be found abundantly satisfactory to all who shall attain thereto.

"Our Earthly House" and "Our House from Heaven."

Nevertheless, the Apostle Paul (2 Cor. 5:1-10) writing concerning this pilgrimage and addressing specially the consecrated Church of the Gospel age, uses language which, while not out of harmony with what we have just seen, foregoing, may be nevertheless properly understood to refer to the present mortal bodies of the saints, as their houses of pilgrimage—their temporary houses, while on the way to their permanent homes, the bodies which God hath promised to them that love him. . . .

It is true that in this present body or temporary house of pilgrimage we groan—oppressed not only by the evil influence of the world and the devil on every hand but also and especially by the weaknesses of our own flesh. For when we would do good, evil is present with us, so that the good which we would do we are often hindered from doing, while the evil which we do not approve often obtrudes itself on us and requires to be continually resisted and overcome. . . .

But our groaning is not with a desire to be unclothed; we do not wish to be without a body, for that at very best all down through the Gospel age would mean to be "asleep in Jesus," waiting for the resurrection morning that then we might be "clothed upon with our house from heaven," our new, perfect and permanent body, our "home." What we prefer is not to have the little spark of present life extinguished, but to have it swallowed up, absorbed into the perfect conditions of the perfect life, with its perfect body.

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*The words "of them that are saved" in this text are not found in the older MSS. Very evidently they are an interpolation: because after the nations are saved, brought into harmony with God, they will no longer be "nations" (Gentiles, heathen), but parts of the one holy nation, the Kingdom of God.

"Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given us the earnest of the spirit." This perfect condition which we are to obtain in the resurrection will be the grand consummation of our salvation which God has promised; and the new mind, the new will begotten by the Word of truth, is reckoned as the beginning of that which will be perfected when the first resurrection shall have completed it. The holy spirit granted us in the present time is a hand payment so to speak, an "earnest" or assurance of the grand and gracious results for which we are hoping and striving, groaning and praying.

"Therefore we are always confident knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body [so long as we feel entirely contented with present conditions —ourselves and our surroundings], we are absent from the Lord." If we were living near to him,"walking with God, we would not feel perfectly satisfied with present attainments, conditions, etc.; but would feel like pilgrims and strangers, seeking a better rest, a better home, "which God hath in reservation for them that love him." But this, as the Apostle explains, is true only of those who walk by faith and not by sight.

"But we are confident [full of faith toward God, we rejoice to walk by faith], and are well pleased rather to be from home [homeless, pilgrims and strangers on the earth] and to be at home with the Lord" in the spirit of our fellowship.

For this cause we are striving, that whether it be by and by when we reach our home, or whether it be in the present time when we are actually away from home, pilgrims and strangers, we strive that we may be acceptable with the Lord; that we may have his favor and blessing and realize his fellowship and presence and know that we shall ultimately be accepted by him. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to the things he hath done whether it be good or bad." All through this pilgrimage we are standing at the bar of our Lord's judgment: he is testing us, proving us, to see whether or not we love him and the things which make for righteousness and peace; and if so, how much we are willing to sacrifice for righteousness' sake. He marks the degree of our love by the measure of our self-denials and self-sacrifices for his sake, the truth's sake.

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It is written, he "giveth songs in the night," and "He hath put a new song into my mouth." It causes us no surprise to know that the saints will "be joyful in glory" and sing aloud with the high praises of God in their mouths, when it shall be given to them to execute the judgments written (Psa. 149:4-9); but it may strike some as peculiar that the present conditions of God's people, the condition of imperfection and physical frailty, in which we groan and are burdened, should be a condition in which songs and thanksgiving and joy should prevail with us. Nevertheless, this is the divine will, as it is the divine statement, respecting all who are truly overcomers: they are all to be joyful in the house of their pilgrimage. Respecting this joy our Lord declares "Your joy no man taketh from you." "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."—John 14:27; 16:22.

So then, while there is a measure of groaning because of some burdens on the part of those who have attained to the new life, there are also blessed joys which the world cannot give, neither take away: and these are the source and cause of the unceasing joy and "songs in the night," before the glorious dawn of the new Millennial day: these songs are inspired by the joys granted us in the house of our pilgrimage—while we are actually absent from our "home."

What are our joys which no man taketh from us? and which persecution and affliction and trouble can only deepen and widen and make more sweet? What joy is this? This joy is a foretaste of the blessings to come, an earnest of our inheritance. It is inspired by confidence in him on whom we have believed: confidence that he is both able and willing to perfect the work which he has begun and which we desire shall be perfected in his own best way: confidence that so long as we are firmly holding to his gracious promises with the arms of our faith, he will not permit us to be separated from him. Who shall separate us from the love of God in Christ? Shall tribulation and persecution? Our confidence is that "no one is able to pluck us out of the Father's hand," and that "the Father himself loveth" us, and will not turn us away so long as we desire to abide obediently in his love. Yea, we are confident that all things are working together for good to those who love God; confident that he who is for us is more powerful than all who can be against us. Such confidence is sure to bring joy beyond the world's comprehension, and a peace of God that passeth all understanding, which keeps the heart.

And such joy, produced by the true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ received into an honest heart, naturally and properly awakens the "songs in the house of our pilgrimage."

"'Mid all the tumult and the strife I hear the music ringing,
It finds an echo in my soul, how can I keep from singing."

The word "song" has a wider meaning than simply a musical cadence: it is used in the Scriptures and elsewhere to indicate a joyful message of any kind. For instance, we say, referring to the gospel, the knowledge of the divine plan, "Thou hast put a new song into my mouth, even the loving-kindness of our God." And it is a fact that those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, those who have received the joy which no man can take from them, those who have tasted of the grace of God in Christ, will not only rejoice and literally sing musical songs with their lips, but they will also rejoice to have their entire lives a song of praise and thanksgiving unto God. The song will bubble over on every proper occasion: so fully will the cleansed, justified and consecrated heart appreciate God's goodness.

Wherever Christians find themselves without this joy of the Lord, and where they have no song in the house of their pilgrimage, they have reason to fear that there is something wrong,—that the connections between their own hearts and the Lord are not full and complete. If they are unacquainted with this joy and these songs, it is because they have never fully accepted the Lord as their portion, and consecrated themselves to his service. . . .

In the Cloudy Day.

It is true, nevertheless, that our Christian experience is not always of a kind calculated to produce an exuberance of spirit: it is doubtless to our advantage that sometimes there are dark hours such as our dear Redeemer experienced when he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." Such experiences no doubt draw us nearer to the fountain of comfort, of joy and peace, and are blessings in disguise, and amongst the "all things" which are working together for our good. But even in the very midst of trials and difficulties, and while cast down so that the songs do not abound, we may nevertheless in all conditions and at all times realize God's love and care and so firmly hold on to the Lord, with the hand of faith, that we would in the darkest moments be able to realize the joy of our Master's sympathy and love and help, and thus have the joy which no disaster of the present time can interrupt.

Despondency and loss of these joys and songs may sometimes result from ill health: in which case, if the illness be the result of selfish gratification, we have room for a lesson and reform; or it may seem to be the result of unselfish fidelity to the service of the truth, along the lines of duty, and if so, as soon as this is recognized, our joys and songs will return. In illustration let us remember Paul and Silas praising God in the prison of Philippi, while their backs were still lacerated and bleeding.

It should be the aim of the Lord's people to cultivate this joy and the conditions favorable to it, daily. The condition of our hearts has much to do with it; for this joy is not wholly dependent upon the heads,—our knowledge of the divine Word and plan. Its possession and increase depends chiefly upon the heart—the center of our affections. If we set our affections, our hearts, on earthly things and seek for joy through the various gratifications of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, etc., we will thereby quench to some extent the spirit of the new mind, and correspondingly decrease the joys of the new mind. On the contrary, the more we overcome the world, the flesh and the devil, the more we seek to do the will of our Father who is in heaven, the more we seek for the fellowship and communion of our dear Redeemer, the more we seek to do those things which are pleasing in his sight, so much the more will we have of the joy and peace which no man taketh from us and which trials, difficulties and persecutions can only make the more sweet and precious.

And the more we have of this new mind, and the closer we are in sympathy with the Lord, the more we will desire to sing heartily "The old, old story of Jesus and his love."

"How happy and blessed the hours,
Since Jesus I always can see!
Sweet prospects, sweet birds and sweet flowers
Have all gained new sweetness to me."

—Z. '97: 303-306.

"O Absalom, My Son, My Son!"

2 Sam. 18: 24-33.

Golden Text:—"A foolish son is a grief to his father."—Prov. 17: 25.

UTTERLY surprised and unprepared for Absalom's unfilial conduct was King David, when he learned of his son's rebellion and realized its extensiveness and how the hearts of the people had been stolen from him by his son's perfidy. He at once perceived that no other course was open to him than that of flight. It was a time of peace, and he had not a large retinue of soldiers at the Capital, but merely what might be termed a body guard. With these and the loyal officers of the court he fled across the Jordan, where he had time and opportunity to gather a few reinforcements and where he might feel comparatively secure in the small but strongly fortified city called Mahanaim. Meantime Absalom displayed his contempt for his father and his household and thus, so to speak, showed the people that the rebellion was one in which no quarter or reconciliation was to be expected. With a large army which had cast in their fortunes with the rebellious prince and expected under his patronage to reap large results of honor and influence and power as successors to the officers of the kingdom, Absalom pursued King David with haste. There seems to have been no doubt whatever that he was bent an capping the climax of his disgraceful course by the murder of his father. His pursuit with a large army meant this.

Although King David's army was much the smaller of the two, they probably had the advantage in that many of the King's guard were men of special ability and large experience as warriors, according to the methods of their time. The King was persuaded not to go with the army, whereupon he divided it into three parts under three of his ablest adherents. These met Absalom's army, and attacking it from different quarters, the battle resulted in the slaughter of 20,000 of Absalom's forces and the routing of the remainder, including Absalom himself, who, being caught by the "head" in the low branches of a tree, was unhorsed and left helpless, and was slain by Joab, the chief of King David's generals.

Here our present lesson opens. Near the watch tower of the wall of Mahanaim King David awaits news of the battle, while the watchman in the tower reports that he sees a messenger running, and, later, another. The first he recognizes as the son of his friend the priest, and according to the custom of the times he interpreted this to mean that the tidings were good, because a good man had been sent with them. This custom should still be in force amongst the Lord's people—that a good man would always seek to bear a good message. The words of the mouth and the meditations of the heart of all who are loyal to the Lord should be good—only good, ever good. Thus it is that God chooses not the worldly wise neither the worldly great, but those who are loyal at heart to him as his mouthpieces; and it should more and more be recognized that the bad tidings of great misery are not of the Lord, that those who bear them are not bearing the Lord's message, and that if they had the right attitude of heart toward the Lord, and the right spirit of love, they would not have the disposition to bear an evil message which maligns the divine character in a manner that even the depraved would resent if it were charged against them.

When the first runner arrived he announced in a general way the success of the King's army. Then the King—in harmony with his parting words to the soldiers, that they should spare Absalom in any event—inquired first of all, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" As we are shocked with the unfilial conduct of Absalom toward his father, we are deeply impressed with the father love of David for his erring son, who sought not only his throne but his life. What was the difference between the two characters? which was the more noble, the more honorable, the more admirable? There could be but one answer from any quarter on this subject: even David's enemies could not read this record without an appreciation of his grandeur of soul. He was more anxious for Absalom than for his throne apparently—yea, and for his own life. The difference between the two characters can be accounted for in only one way, namely—that David was a man after God's own heart, one who had passed through trying experiences and learned profitable lessons, one in whom the spirit of love had been considerably developed. Absalom, on the contrary, is an illustration of selfishness and ambition which stooped to anything to accomplish its ends. David, although not a member of the house of sons of which Christ is the head, was one of the noble members of the house of servants of which Moses was the head.—Heb. 3:5, 6.

Some have esteemed that the answer of Ahimaaz was an untruth, intended to soften the facts so as not to wound the feelings of the King; but we cannot agree to this. We hold that, according to the record, the young man told the truth, and we believe that it would be much better for everybody if all mankind similarly confined themselves in their replies to important questions to the strict meaning of the word "know." The reply was that he had seen a commotion, knew that the battle was ended, knew that the victory was on the King's side, but knew nothing more. True, he had heard Joab say something about the King's son, but that was hearsay and not knowledge, and the young man answered the King properly when he said that he did not know the answer to the query about Absalom. The Lord's people above all others should be particular to discriminate between knowledge and belief and hearsay, etc.

The second runner, Cushi, or literally a Cushite —that is, a negro—was probably one of the king's household servants who engaged in the battle He quickly told the whole story, and it was upon hearing thus of Absalom's death that the King was moved to violent grief, and gave utterance to words which stand as amongst the most pathetic on the pages of history. "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

The pity is that the King's love for his son did not take a more practical course at the proper time. He was an indulgent rather than a wise father. Evidently the flash and glitter of the young man's natural talents not only charmed the people but charmed his father, so that he practically had whatever he wanted of everything, the King failing to apply to his son the valuable lessons which he himself would learn, to the effect that the reverence of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and that true happiness and true prosperity are only to be found in this path, which wisdom indicates. His unwise love for his son led him to feel that the young man must sow his wild oats and should not be much restrained, and now when he witnessed the reaping of those wild oats his heart was convulsed with sorrow. And so it has been with many a father and many a mother who, although truly the Lord's, fail to apply to their children the lessons which the Lord has taught them by distressing experiences. It is unnecessary to comment upon the unwisdom of such love and to point the moral to Christian parents. It points itself, and Solomon the wise son expresses it tenderly when he said, in the words of our Golden Text, that "A foolish son is a grief to his father," and noted again that "He who spareth the rod hateth his son." From the practical standpoint, however the matter may appear to the superficial observer, the essence of wisdom is contained in his further observation, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Parents seem not to fully appreciate the fact that in the training of their children, either in the right way or in the wrong way, they are laying out for themselves either joys or sorrows for the future.

King David's inquiry respecting his son, "Is the young man safe?" should be the inquiry of every father and every mother respecting their sons and their daughters; but let them not do as David did—wait until sin has sprouted and blossomed and brought forth evil fruitage. Let them begin by realizing their duty toward their posterity in their earliest infancy. The duty of Christian parents toward their children is next to their duty to the Lord,—indeed the Lord has indicated that parental duty ranks first among all the earthly obligations of the saints.—Z. '03:409-411.

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We shall never have another opportunity of showing God and our Lord Jesus our zeal for righteousness and our earnestness of spirit. The present opportunity is a special one.—Z. '13:312.

Verbi Dei Minister

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine House, and prove Me now, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."—Malachi 3:10.

THE V. D. M. Questions, under the Lord's guidance and blessing, have proven to be of such value to the Church that they have been in the past, and continue to be in the present, recognized as one of the features of the Work which has a close relationship to all the other features. They have emphasized in a particular way the third article of The Vow, which reads: "I vow to still more carefully, if possible, scrutinize my thoughts and words and doings, to the intent that I may be the better enabled to serve Thee and Thy dear flock"; and they have been used by the Lord, we believe, to greatly assist His people in fulfilling this part of their Vow.

We have come to see that the thought has been gradually developing in the minds of the friends that they no longer consider themselves as fully qualified for the particular service of the present hour unless they be able to give, in a satisfactory manner, "a reason for the hope that is in them." This seems to be one of the reasons for the Lord giving these questions at this evening time. . . . They seem to be His examination papers given to His people at the close of the day to prove which ones are fully qualified for the service reserved by Him for this momentous hour.

Hundreds have reached the conclusion that no brother is properly qualified to serve them, either as Elder or as Helper, unless he be able to give a satisfactory answer to the V. D. M. Questions. Many Workers have likewise reached the same conclusion with respect to qualification for their respective services. This is the standard required of all workers. . . . Brother Russell handed his paper in to the Committee the same as any one else. . . .

Surely no Bible Student would consider the V. D. M. Questions to be too high a standard! And yet, we doubt that few of the Ministers occupying the pulpits of the land today could pass this examination (simple though it seems) on the fundamental teachings of the Bible. One dear Sister whose answers to the Questions were recently approved has just written to us expressing her thankfulness **to the Lord** for having passed, and saying that she now feels qualified **to teach the truth to her children in her own home!** Evidently the passing of these examinations has something to do with the sealing of the saints in their foreheads and with their approval by the Unseen Judge.

Purpose Served by the V. D. M. Questions

We believe that the V. D. M. Questions enable each one to get a better focus upon himself, his standing before the Lord, his accurate knowledge of the Truth, his attainments in character development, his relationship to the Brethren. On the other hand, we believe these Questions enable the Brethren to get a better focus upon each one in these various connections and relationships—all of which would be beneficial and helpful in the way of an intelligent co-operation in the Lord's work. Anything like pride or division should be carefully guarded against and avoided. This is the main reason for not giving individual per-centages. We would also deprecate the use of the letters V. D. M. after one's name in the way of a distinctive title. And now, dear Brethren,

"What more can He say than to you He hath said?
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled!"

Surely we are on the eve of a great movement, in which all of the Lord's approved ones desire to have a share!—Z. '17:167, 168.

KERNELS KERNELS KERNELS

Let each child of God bestir himself. Let him encourage the brethren to faithfulness. Let us give close attention to God's Word, that we may become more and more like our Father in Heaven. Let us love the things which are true, right, noble, Godlike. Let us renounce all else for the Heavenly things.—Z. '16: 58.

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Our observation is that there is no more common mistake made by parents than that of supposing their children could not understand or appreciate religious things properly at an early age — say twelve years. The experience of Samuel and our own experience and that of many others assure us that some of the deepest religious sentiments may be experienced as early as twelve years of age. This should be watched for by the parent and should be cultivated with much more care than they cultivate the tenderest flowers in their gardens. The flowers of veneration, spirituality, hope, faith, trust, in the child-mind need and should have tenderest care and watering and weeding and assistance. The parent by nature and by divine direction occupying a responsible position as gardener to these, must appreciate flowers in the hearts of his own family; and if he neglect his responsibilities he is culpable and will surely suffer, not only disappointment in respect to his children in the future, but suffer also in that he will be the loser of certain blessings in his own heart; because it is a part of the divine arrangement that he that watereth others shall himself be watered.—Z. '02: 361.

Published by the Standfast Bible Students. Address all communications: Standfast Bible Students, Scott Building, 2659 Douglas Street, Victoria, B. C.

Old Corn Gems

No. 124

"*And they did eat of the OLD CORN of the land on the morrow after the Passover . . . and the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the OLD CORN of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.*" Joshua 5:11-12.

A SAFE RULE

"WHERE A BROTHER GIVES AN INTERPRETATION OF A SCRIPTURE WHICH DIFFERS FROM THAT GIVEN BY BROTHER RUSSELL, AND BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION SEEMS REASONABLE AND IN HARMONY WITH THE PLAN OF GOD, THEN WE BELIEVE IT A SAFE RULE TO FOLLOW BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION, FOR THE REASON THAT HE IS THE SERVANT OF THE CHURCH, SO CONSTITUTED BY THE LORD FOR THE LAODICEAN PERIOD; AND THEREFORE WE SHOULD EXPECT THE LORD TO TEACH US THROUGH HIM. WHERE THERE ARISES A DOUBT IN THE MIND AS TO WHICH INTERPRETATION IS CORRECT, THEN IT IS ALWAYS SAFER TO RESOLVE THAT DOUBT IN FAVOR OF BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION. WE BELIEVE SUCH TO BE IN HARMONY WITH THE LORD'S WILL."—Z. '18:51.

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"By Grace Are Ye Saved"

"For the grace of God that bringeth [leads to] salvation hath been manifested for all men—teaching us that renouncing ungodly desires we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age, waiting for the blessed hope, even the glorious manifestation of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, devoted to good works."—Titus 2:11-14.

"GRACE, 'tis a charming sound," sang the poet, nor did he exaggerate; for to all who have learned the true meaning of divine grace, that word, like the word "gospel," is a synonym for all the divine mercies which God's people may now or ever enjoy. But this word grace is little used today in common conversation on the every day affairs of life, and consequently remarkably few appreciate its richness, its wealth of significance, and consequently many of the statements of Scripture in which this word occurs are, to the majority of readers, deprived of their real beauty and force.

The word grace signifies **favor**—particularly unmerited favor. Acts of grace are thus to be clearly distinguished from acts of justice and from obligations. If this proper signification were in the minds of people when reading the Scriptures where the word grace so frequently occurs, it would be to all true believers a great protection against numerous of Satan's wiles and false doctrines—the general aim of which is to misrepresent the divine dealings and to pervert and subvert the divine testimonies. Every testimony to the effect that God is extending his "grace" to humanity or to the Church is a testimony to **their unworthiness to justly demand** those favors or blessings.

The spirit of the world in general is that of self-sufficiency and independence; following their own wisdom and lacking the instruction and wisdom from above, the worldly-wise regard themselves with complacency; they believe themselves to be quite sufficiently righteous to merit a good deal of divine blessing and reward: true, they admit also that they have imperfections, but these they expect to pay for to the full according to some law of divine retribution. Hence they are undisposed to look for or to accept pardon, forgiveness, justification through the great sacrifice for sins which God has provided. They see a law in nature according to which fire burns him who believes that it will burn and burns equally him who believes not that it will burn. And so they regard all of the laws governing humanity as merciless, graceless—strictly just.

The Scripture presentation of the matter does not overlook the law of retribution—that sin of any kind, the transgression of any law, will surely bring its penalty, whoever may be the sinner and whatever may be the conditions. And the propositions respecting divine **grace,** rightly understood, are not in conflict with this universal law of retribution: the proposition of **grace** is not to prevent fire from burning, but to provide a healing balm; not to prevent the wages of sin from following transgression, but to succor the repentant who desire to reform, and to help him back to divine favor and full recovery, along the lines of strictest justice:—by a willing ransom-price. And since this succor is wholly unmerited on man's part and without just obligation on God's part, it is purely of divine favor—"grace." Indeed, if it were not for sin and its retributive punishments, there would be no room for grace: it is man's necessity for grace that constitutes the divine opportunity for its exercise. Grace, however, operates in harmony with the divine laws, and not in violation of them.

Remembering that **divine grace** signifies God's unmerited mercy and favor, let us examine its operation in the light of Scripture:—

The first movement of divine grace toward mankind was the exercise of benevolence, love and compassion toward mankind in his fallen and sinful condition. There was nothing in man to merit this compassion and sympathy; quite to the contrary: we were aliens from God and enemies of his righteous rule through wicked works,—the depravity wrought in us through sin voluntarily committed by father Adam.

It was in harmony with this thought of grace on God's part, or, as we might term it, God's gracious plan, that he revealed something respecting his purpose of ransom and restitution to father Abraham;—thus preaching first, beforehand, to him the good tidings of a coming blessing or grace, saying, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blest." Abraham, and others who believed God, rejoiced in mind under the influence of this gracious promise—altho even the beginning of its fulfilment was still nearly two thousand years off.

The third step of grace was in the great gift of divine love, our Lord Jesus Christ. It included the gracious arrangement made with the only begotten Son of God, on account of which he joyfully laid aside his heavenly glories and conditions and humbled himself in death as the ransom or substitute for the first Adam and thus incidentally a "ransom for all" the race of Adam.

It was a fourth step of grace when God, having determined to select a Church, a "little flock," to be heirs of God and joint-heirs of Jesus Christ their Lord, in the dispensing of the divine favors or **grace,** promised through Abraham, began the work of selecting this Church—receiving at Pentecost the first installment, from the house of servants into the house of sons and joint-heirs. (John 1:12, 13.) Altho tests were applied to those received into the family of sons, and altho character qualifications were imposed upon them . . . nevertheless this also was a step of grace, because there were no obligations resting upon God to confer upon any such a "high calling," such "riches of his grace in Jesus Christ our Lord." . . .

The grace of God will still further be manifested when the "elect" Church shall all have been "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light"; for the blessings which will be conferred upon this glorified Church will not only be such as were not merited, such therefore as were not of obligation upon God's part, but according to the divine testimony they will be additionally great, super-abounding in grace, "exceedingly abundantly more than we know how to ask or expect"; for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath in reservation for those that love him." —1 Cor. 2:9.

Even then, God's grace will not have exhausted itself;—even after having thus honored and blessed and exalted the Church, the body of Christ, whose only merit consisted first in an honest confession of sin and an acceptance of the divine favor, and second, in their "reasonable service" in rendering their lives in obedience to him who bought them and in and through whom the divine graces were extended.

Then divine grace will begin to be **fully manifested**—then **all** shall see it, **all** shall know it, and **all who will** may share it; for then will begin the glorious "times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began"—the Millennial age of a thousand years; the time when the knowledge of the Lord shall graciously be caused to fill the whole earth; the time when all the sin-blinded eyes shall be opened; the time when all the prisoners of the pit (death) shall come forth, that they may be instructed in righteousness. Then, according to the grace of the divine promise, he who redeemed the world shall judge the world in righteousness, a trial, an opportunity, that whosoever will, with a knowledge of sin and its penalty, and with a knowledge of righteousness and its rewards, with a knowledge of the goodness and grace of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord, may then stand trial and be judged as to whether they will **receive** God's grace and its provisions of eternal life, or whether they will **reject** these and die the second death.

Here we behold the wonderful steps of grace. No one can intelligently believe in divine grace who holds the theory of evolution or any other theory of salvation than the Scriptural one, which recognizes man's original creation in the divine likeness, his fall into sin and death, his redemption therefrom by the death of our Redeemer, and his hope for recovery through divine grace extended to the Church and to be extended through the Church (under Christ its Head) to all the families of the earth.

Coming now to consider present manifestations of divine grace toward the Church, we note that many professed followers of the Lord fail in a very large degree to appreciate this grace which it is their privilege to enjoy. This is attributable largely to false teaching and preaching. In very much that is preached in the name of the gospel of the grace of God, the element of grace is entirely omitted, and such preaching is proportionately vain—sometimes worse than vain—in that it is delusive and subversive. For instance, how common it is for people to hear and to believe that if they **"do right"** they will have divine rewards at the end of life's race; but if they **"do wrong"** they shall have divine punishment at the end of the race. Such views ignore grace entirely, for if we are to be punished in proportion to our shortcomings and rewarded for our obedient deeds, where would be the **"grace"**? where would be the mercy? where would be the necessity of a Savior, a sin-offering, an atonement and a reconciliation with God? and where would be the peace **through** our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? None of these mercies and blessings can be rightly recognized except as the grace of God (his unmerited favor) is seen in them.

The fact is that the divine standard of righteousness is much higher than men generally understand: with God righteousness is synonymous with perfection; and hence "all unrighteousness [all imperfection, however or whenever or wherever] —is [a proof of] sin." Thus all men are proved to be sinners,—because all are imperfect, **un-right**. And the divine law is that the sinner, the wrongdoer, the **un-right**, the imperfect, **shall not live.** "The wages of sin is death." Whoever understands this can see at once that man's only hope of eternal life lies, not **in his own perfection,** but in **divine mercy, grace.** To plead that we are not wholly bad, corrupt, or even that we are not so bad as some others, is to admit our imperfection, and hence to prove the hopelessness of our case except as divine **grace** intervenes to help us.

But, says some one, That is not a fair statement of the case. God made me as I am, imperfect; and justice requires that he shall not demand of me an impossible perfection, nor punish me for weaknesses and imperfections beyond my control.

Such reasoning implies a misunderstanding of the case. It is a mistake to assume that God made us imperfect. All "his work is perfect." (Deut. 32:4; Psa. 18:30; Matt. 5:48.) He neither created idiots nor other physical and mental malformations of humanity, but, as the Scriptures declare, we were "born in sin and shapen in iniquity—in sin did my mother conceive me." Our blemishes come to us from our parents, not from God. The Scriptures not only point out to us father Adam's sinless perfection, saying that he was created in the image of God, but they plainly declare that it was by his disobedience that the divine sentence of death passed upon him and passed as an inheritance, a legacy of evil, to his offspring, saying, "By one man's disobedience sin entered into the world and death as a result of sin, and so death passed upon **all men,** for all are sinners [imperfect]." Truly also, "The fathers have eaten a sour grape [disobedience] and the children's teeth are set on edge."—Rom. 5:12, 17-19; Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 18:2.

The very basis of all our hopes, then, is this grace of God, operating toward us through Jesus Christ our Lord. God's grace does not subvert or set aside God's law, however, and he who would rightly appreciate and use the divine grace should recognize this fact. God's grace was not intended to frustrate the spirit of his own law: it was not intended to clear the guilty, the wilful transgressor. It acknowledges the divine law, attests its justice, and has fully met its requirements in the person and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus on behalf of Adam and all his race involved in his transgression and his penalty—death. Hence it was that "Christ died, the just for the unjust" in order "that God might be just and yet be the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." And the only condition upon which God's grace is offered is our acknowledgment of our sin, weakness and imperfection, a sorrow for these and a repentance and reformation to the extent of our ability and an acceptance of Christ Jesus as the personification of divine grace. Upon no other condition can we step into this grace of God or walk in its way and inherit its rewards.

And even after we have received Christ and God's grace in him, and are no longer recognized as strangers, aliens to God, but sons, as servants of righteousness and no longer servants of sin, being imperfect, we are not free from blemishes of word, thought and deed; yet, God's grace continues with us to cover our blemishes until perfected in the resurrection. Under its provisions whatever is contrary to our wills, and purely the result of hereditary weakness, may be forgiven; and our obliquity and blame-worthiness be gauged only by the measure of wilfulness or assent connected with the wrongdoing. Nevertheless, to some extent, chastisements or natural penalties for violations of law may be expected: but to those under grace these will come as helps by the way, causing them more and more to detest sin, as corrections in righteousness, as chastisements and disciplines for their blessing. And even these sure penalties may be to some extent ameliorated in accordance with the wisdom of our great High priest, who, having borne all our sins in his own body on the tree, is freely empowered to abate for us so much of the penalty of our misdeeds as grace may be able to cover as un-wilful transgressions. . . .

This thought of the divine grace as the basis of all our mercies is interwoven with all the promises of God's Word. Thus the Apostle speaks of the gracious plan of God, and Christ as the exponent of that plan as "the grace of God and the gift by grace."—Rom. 5:15.

Our approach to God in prayer is spoken of as an approach, not to the throne of justice and equity, but as an approach to "the throne of grace," where "we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need."—Heb. 4:16.

Again we are exhorted that our hearts be established in grace; and again told that unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of our faith; and again the Apostle declares of himself, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

According to the testimony of our text this grace is general, "for all men," and must therefore ultimately in some manner or other be extended to all men,—the dead as well as the living. The translation of our Common Version is manifestly faulty here; all men, even in this most enlightened day of the world's history, have not yet beheld God's grace in any degree, nor has it as yet brought them salvation. But since it has been provided freely for all, so ultimately it shall be extended to all, that all may avail themselves of it.

The teaching of this grace is not that we may continue in sin that grace may abound; for divine grace is intended to benefit only those who renounce sin and become servants of righteousness: and thus, as our text declares, God's grace teaches us that we should repudiate sin and live separate from every ungodly desire, in righteousness, soberness and godlikeness. Furthermore, as our text declares, this grace of God does not claim to have reached its completeness, and to have accomplished in us and for us the grand designs of the God of all grace. On the contrary, it teaches us to wait for the consummation of this grace until the glorious manifestation of the Son of God in the majesty and power of his Kingdom, to unite his Church with himself as his Bride and joint heir, the channel of mercies and blessings through which God's grace shall flow to all the groaning creation.—Rom. 8:18-22; 11:31.

A much misunderstood text respecting grace is the one used as a caption for this article, namely, "By grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8.) The erroneous thought given by many is that our faith is not our own faith, not of our own volition, but an impartation, a gift from God. Of course, in one sense every gift and blessing which we enjoy is indirectly if not directly from God; "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." (Jas. 1:17.) But the proper understanding of the Apostle's words, we believe, is this: It is of God's grace and not of personal merit on our part that salvation is offered to us; and altho that salvation is offered to us as a reward of faith (including true faith's obedience), yet we cannot even boast respecting our faith as though it merited the Lord's favor,—for our faith is something which is the indirect result of divine providence also; there are millions of others in the world who might exercise just as much faith as we if they had been favored of God with as much light, intelligence, knowledge, as a basis of faith: hence our faith is not to be credited as a meritorious condition but we are to be thankful to God for it, for the circumstances and conditions which have made it possible for us to exercise faith are of his grace.—Z. '98:102-107.

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We should all be fully awake and watching to see what is the duty of the hour and then to be diligent in doing it.—Z. '15:55.

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Every parent should recognize himself as having incurred grave responsibilities toward his children, not only for their temporal necessities, but equally for their mental and moral training; and the parents who are most faithful in the discharge of this God-appointed responsibility are sure to be the ones who are running the race themselves most successfully: for they will find that every effort to make clear the divine plan to the child will bring clearness and force to the parent's mind, and every attempt to inculcate the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of truth, will be sure to bring with it a blessing, not only upon the heart of the child, but upon the heart of the parent.—Z. '01:62.

The Nature and Methods of God's Elections

We have heretofore shown that election as taught in the Scriptures is not in opposition to, but in harmony with, the free moral agency of the elected classes. We have endeavored to show that, while during the Jewish age there was an election or selection of a "house of servants," as, during the Christian age, an election or selection of a "house of sons" (Heb. 3:5, 6), yet neither of these selections was or is arbitrary so far as **individuals** are concerned. God did arbitrarily foreordain and determine that these two classes should be selected, and arbitrarily set apart a limited period of time for the selection of each; and for aught we know to the contrary, he arbitrarily and unalterably fixed the number of each of these classes, so that not one more, nor one less shall complete each of these elect classes, foreordained in this plan. But he did not, and in harmony with his own justice he could not, arbitrarily fore-ordain and elect that certain individuals **must** be of these classes regardless of their wishes and endeavors, and regardless of the operations of his own arrangements and regulations governing these elections.

But before any are able to look at the subjects of Election and Reprobation intelligently, they must first of all get rid of the false and blinding idea that election implies "selected to go to heaven," and reprobation, "selected to go to eternal torture." No such significance attaches in any way to the words. God not only applies justice to his creatures in the laws governing them, but he applies the same to himself; hence it would be as unjust and impossible for God to choose, select or elect an unworthy person to heaven as it would be for him to torture a righteous person. Furthermore, to be unchosen to a particular office or position does not imply that the unchosen one is wholly undesirable, but merely that he is not chosen to the particular office or position for which choice is being made.

Since God is good and all his plans are wise and beneficent, it follows that to be **selected** by him to perform any part of his plan is an honor and a favor. Thus God, having purposed in himself the **redemption** of mankind from the curse, and the consequent lifting up or restoration of all things (Acts 3:19, 21), not only foretold it, but began preparations for that restitution. Accordingly, having also determined that this restitution should be accomplished by means of a "Kingdom of God" or a government of earth in harmony with his laws, and having predetermined that this Kingdom should be of two parts, a human and a spiritual, he began his preparation by selecting first the natural or human portion of the proposed, and as yet future, Kingdom.

Mark well that God fore-ordained these two classes, and the work for which he intended them, long before the individuals composing them had any existence. But how has this predetermined will of God operated in selecting the predetermined classes for the predetermined service of honor? Infinite wisdom made choice among the families of earth and chose Abraham and his family. Arbitrarily, and without reason for such a choice? Probably not: in all probability Abraham's family was best suited to the divine purpose, the best adapted to the execution of the plan God had in view.

It was part of Israel's difficulty that they supposed God's election of their nation an arbitrary one, and thought it a sufficient guarantee of God's exclusive favor to be able to say, Abraham is our father—we are, through him, the elect people of God. (Luke 3:8.) But this was a mistake; for though God had chosen Abraham's family for a special service, and separated them by his law and favors from other nations, this was the extent of the favor they enjoyed—"To them were committed the oracles of God."

But by reason of this national favor each individual of that nation had special knowledge and opportunities beyond those of other nations; and their faithfulness or unfaithfulness, obedience or disobedience, to this knowledge and favor **decided** which individuals of that called and chosen and favored nation were worthy of the position of future honor and service as members of the human or earthly phase of the Kingdom of God, which is to be established in ruling and blessing power "under the whole heavens."

Which individuals, because of faith and obedience, were accepted as making their election sure to that future honor and service, we know only in part. The names of some of the most notable only are given by the Apostle. (Heb. 11:17-39.) These evidenced their worthiness of the favors of God held before them, by the sacrifices which they made of present honors and comforts, to obtain the future and lasting honors of heavenly promise. Therefore God will in due time honor them by manifesting them as his **elect** to the position and service to which he called them, and will give them a portion or share in the "heavenly city"; i.e., in the heavenly government or kingdom which he will establish—the portion promised them and to which they and all Israel were called or invited, but for which the great majority were unworthy. Yet the rejected Israelites are not to be cast off from all favor of God; rather, they will be blessed by and under the righteous dominion which Christ will establish, and in which their fellows are granted the earthly portion. They shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, and they themselves unworthy of that honor.—Heb. 11:16; Luke 13:28.

The election of the number for the human portion of the Kingdom ended about the time of Jesus' baptism and anointing, when he began to bring life and immortality to light. Then began the selection of the class which God had predetermined he would select from among men for exaltation to the "divine nature," and to constitute the spiritual phase of the Kingdom which will restore and bless the world. Of these Jesus was the first, the "fore-runner," the chief or captain. In the selection of this spiritual class, Abraham's literal descendants, the Hebrews, have not been so exclusively favored as they were in the previous election; for instead of the light of truth (the "oracles of God"), through which the call is made, being confined to Israel, it has by God's design and arrangement gone out into all the earth—calling all who have "an ear to hear" to justification, through faith in the blood of Christ as their redemption price, and, further, to sacrifice and glory—the "high calling." The only pre-eminence given to Hebrews under this last call is that it **commenced** with them. (Luke 24:47.) The previous call was confined to them.

Nor should we overlook the fact that, though in the process of selecting these two classes certain individuals were elected or chosen to do a service in connection with the calling of these classes, this in no way implied their election to one of those classes. Thus Jacob, like Abraham, was chosen to be a father of the favored nation, and Moses, Samuel and others were chosen to a service in the first selection, as Paul and the other apostles, and others since, have been chosen and selected for special service as God's agents in the selection of the spiritual class; yet their being elected to this service was in no way an infringement upon their free moral agency, and in no way decided for them the question of their final election to the class to which each was called.

Thus Paul, after telling us that God chose him and prepared him for this service in early life (Gal. 1:15), also assures us that he knew full well that the call to this service, and the fact that he was used as a servant in announcing the "heavenly calling" to others, by no means proved that he would attain the prize of his high calling.

To be called to such special service as Paul and the other apostles were called to was a special honor which they must appreciate to use; to have a call to the heavenly and the future service is a still greater honor; and the worthiness of the apostles, and of all who will attain it, is tested by the measure of their love and gratitude to God, as shown in their obedience, and proved by their self-denials.

That Paul understood that obedience or unfaithfulness to the present opportunities was to prove whether he was worthy or unworthy to be a member of the already elect or predetermined spiritual class—the "body of Christ"—is clearly evident from his many statements to this effect. For instance, he says, "I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection [I do not allow my human appetites, or ambitions, or hopes, to govern my course, but I permit the new mind, begotten of God's promises, to rule], lest that by any means, when I have preached to others [of the great prize for which we run and sacrifice], I myself should be a castaway"* [rejected as unworthy a place in that choice company which God has predetermined shall be composed of **"overcomers"**]. (1 Cor. 9:27.) "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended [or **grasped** the prize to which God called me, and for which I, with you, am running]; but . . . I press along the line towards the prize of the high calling." (Phil. 3:11-15.) And in the preceding verses he tells us in what way he was running or pressing along the line to win this great prize which God has already predetermined to give to the class whom he would select for it. He tells us that he was casting away former hopes, and ambitions, and honors, as though they were worthless and vile, and spending every effort to win a place in the body of Christ, and to secure a share in the **chief** resurrection (to spiritual being).

He well knew that, because redeemed, "All in their graves" would in due time "come forth": but he knew, too, that only the elect "little flock" would be raised spiritual beings like their Captain and Forerunner; and he was willing to sacrifice everything (as Christ also did) to obtain a place in that elect class. The Apostle knew also that from the moment of consecration he was **reckoned** a member of that chosen "body" or "bride" of Christ, and that his name was "written in heaven" (Heb. 12:23); and though he had full assurance of faith each moment, because of full knowledge that he was daily a living sacrifice, yet he also knew that for him to turn back, or even to "look back" (or desire to recover that which he had sacrificed), would prove him unworthy of the kingdom position. He well knew that he who wrote his name in heaven, when he consecrated and started to run, could blot it out; and that the condition upon which it would not be blotted out was, **faithfulness to the end of the race.** (Rev. 3:5.) And not until his faithful course was closing with martyrdom did he write, "I **have** fought a good fight; I **have finished** my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up [reserved securely] for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."—2 Tim. 4:7, 8.

Yet, while remembering that God has made the deciding of the matter, whether or not we shall be members of the elect company to which he called us, to depend upon our faithfulness to the end—"unto death"—we should ever bear in mind, as Paul did, that the prize offered to us is not offered because of our worthiness of it, but of God's grace or favor; and that our running is acceptable only because of God's **"mercy"** in imputing to us the merits of Christ, our Redeemer, as the covering of our inherited weaknesses and imperfections.—Rom. 9:16. . . .

And this same principle will obtain in the next age as well, when the full opportunities of that age of favors are enjoyed by all the world. Those who wilfully reject and despise the precious blood, spurn forgiveness through **it,** and thus crucify Christ afresh, will thereby fall hopelessly; because, after having enjoyed the blessings secured by the ransom, they spurn and reject it. Christ dieth no more. The one sacrifice once fully appreciated and wilfully rejected leaves the rejectors in the same state as though no ransom had ever been given. It remands them again under the original penalty, **death, extinction.** And, because they had once been redeemed from it as the Adamic penalty, and had thus again come under it of their own will and act, it is called the **second** death.

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* "Castaway," here, is from the same Greek word elsewhere translated "reprobate," and signifies rejected—not accepted.

Thus may not all see clearly God's election of classes for future service, and of nations and individuals for present service, and yet recognize that God leaves his creatures free to exercise their own wills in accepting or rejecting his arrangements and favors? He seeks such to worship and serve him as serve from the heart—in spirit and in truth; and such pre-eminently are the classes selected for the Kingdom's positions and honors—Z. '92:307-312.

Tables of the Law Replaced

"Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness."—Nehemiah 9:17.

WHOEVER fails to see that Moses and Israel and the Law were types fails of getting the real lesson out of them. Moses was not merely a type of Jesus; but as St. Peter explains, he was a type of the entire Church of Christ, of which Jesus is the Head—the Church of Glory. St. Peter's words are, "Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me."—Acts 3:22, 23.

Jesus was raised up first, and since Pentecost the raising up from amongst the brethren has progressed. The work will be consummated when the full number of the elect Church shall have been tested, proven and accepted to glory. Then the antitypical Moses will begin His great work of delivering all of mankind who desire to come back into harmony with God—all of whom were represented in the twelve tribes of Israel.

The Church of the Gospel Age is, as St. James declares (1:18), "A kind of first-fruits [to God] of His creatures." Otherwise it is called the Church of the First-borns, and was typically represented in the tribe of Levi, all of whom represented the first-borns of Israel, saved in the Passover. These first-borns were divided into two classes—the priests and their servants. The priests represented The Christ—High Priest and under priests. The Levites represented the remaining number of the overcomers.

The antitypical Priests will be made a Royal Priesthood. Jesus, the great High Priest, invested with kingly honors, will have associated with Himself the faithful Little Flock, a Royal Priesthood, His joint-heirs. The remainder of the overcoming Church are colaborers on a less glorious plane. The work of all will be primarily to bless the people of the earth desiring to come into harmony with God, and typically represented in the remaining tribes of Israel.

The First Tables of the Law

The first tables of the Law were prepared by the Lord Himself, as well as written by Him. This represents how man in his creation was a perfect image of his Creator, formed, created, in full accord with the Divine will and fully expressive of the Divine Law. Adam needed no further preparation, and he needed no other law than that which was in and of himself as a perfect being.

But by reason of sin this Law was broken. Poor humanity no longer has a proper judgment respecting sin and righteousness. The original tables are shattered and have grown illegible. Man needs the great Mediator, to make reconciliation for his iniquity and then to rewrite the Law of God in his flesh.

Moses was instructed to hew out the two tables of the Law. This would represent that The Christ of glory is fully commissioned to prepare the hearts of mankind for the rewriting of the Divine Law. To prepare man to obey God's Law will require that they shall experience Restitution—lifting up out of sin and degradation. This work, committed to Moses in the type, is in the antitype committed to Christ.

The second coming of Moses down from the mountain with the two tables of the Law was peculiarly different from the presentation of the first tables, which were broken. Coming with the second tables, Moses' face shone; and it was necessary for him to put on a veil, which thereafter he wore when in the presence of the Israelites, but removed when going into the presence of God.

This is understood to signify that Christ's work as the Mediator, at His Second Advent, will be accompanied by a veiling of His glory, so that the world will not see Jesus. This He declared, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye shall see Me." However, the Apostle explains that the Church will be prepared to see Christ in His glory by being changed from the earthly nature to the Heavenly nature. "We shall see Him as He is"; for "we shall be like Him"—"changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"; for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." (1 John 3:2; 1 Cor. 15:50-52.) We remember that Saul of Tarsus saw Jesus thus in His glory "shining above the brightness of the sun" at noonday. Seeing him unveiled, Saul was smitten to the earth and seriously blinded.

The putting on of the veil (Exodus 34:1, 4, 28-35) represented that at the Second Advent of Christ, when He will accomplish His great work as Mediator for man and become their Leader into the Land of Promise—Paradise restored—He will veil His glory from mankind, and speak to them through the veil, and not directly from the spirit plane. While mankind will see Jesus no more, it will be to their advantage. Instead, they will see Him represented in the Ancient Worthies; as He declared, "Ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the Prophets."—Luke 13:28.

Nor will that mean that mankind will merely see the Ancient Worthies as they were. Rather, the world will see them resurrected in human perfection, and therefore perfect, in the image of God, samples of what all mankind may attain unto, if they will but give heed to the words of the great Prophet—the antitypical Moses.

St. Peter tells us of that time, saying, "It shall come to pass that the soul that will not hear [obey] that Prophet [The Glorious Messiah] shall be destroyed from amongst the people."—Acts 3:22, 23 —Z. '13:254.

The Present Advantages of Faith

"Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."—Hebrews 11:6.

PAUL the Apostle is in this text laying down a general principle as to what is the Divine pleasure. God is not pleased to deal with humanity as with the brute beasts. He did not make man to live a mere animal existence, appreciating only the enjoyment of his physical senses. Man was made to glorify his Creator and to have a knowledge of Him, in order to obtain the fullest happiness and blessing from the enjoyment of his God-given faculties.

As man shall in due time come to see his Creator's glorious character and the object of his own existence, and as he grows in ability to appreciate these, he will be most highly blessed. The knowledge gained will bring full confidence in God to all who become upright in heart and who desire to conform themselves to the grand purpose of their Maker in creation. Mankind are now bowed down with the weight of the sin and the accumulated infirmities of the ages, in bondage to Satan and his evil reign. Man has been the spectacle of the Universe. He has been the source of astonishment and sorrow to all the holy beings in God's infinite domain. His experiences, his weaknesses, his degradation, his sufferings under sin, have through all the centuries been preaching most powerful sermons, and have been giving impressive object lessons as to the effects of disobedience to God.

Throughout the Millennial Age, the great Jehovah will do a mighty work through the Messiah. It will be a work of opening all the eyes long blinded to the glorious light of the goodness of God. It will be a work of unstopping all the ears long deaf to the voice of Truth. The sons of men shall be washed from their pollution; their wounds and putrefying sores shall be anointed, bound up and gradually healed by the Great Physician; their tattered raiment shall be exchanged for the garments of righteousness. By the close of the Golden Age of Blessing man shall stand forth clothed and in his right mind, a glorious image of his Creator in the flesh.

When man shall have attained the full likeness of God, he will not need any special development of faith; for faith will be inherent in him. He will have communion with his Maker; he will once more be a son of God. He will know his Creator as even Adam in his perfection did not know Him. He will have had such revelations of the terrible nature and results of sin, of the marvelous love of God in his deliverance from sin, that he will have an established character, fixed for righteousness, and a hatred of sin that will be an all-sufficient safeguard throughout eternity. After all this manifestation of the contrast between righteousness and iniquity, between the glorious sunshine of God's love and the horrible darkness and gloom of the pit from which they were lifted, any who still love and prefer the bondage of corruption will be destroyed in the Second Death.

When man first fell from his perfect estate, and the penalty of death was pronounced, the conditions did not manifest Jehovah as a loving God; and man thought he would be happier in his alienation and sin if he did not know about God at all. God gave, indeed, a hint of a coming time of restoration, when the Seed of the woman should crush the serpent's head; but the statement was vague. So, with very few exceptions, men tried to forget God, to give Him no place in their thoughts or their affections. Gradually they drifted further and further away from Him.

"Without God, Having No Hope!"

St. Paul in commenting upon this fact, declares that God gave mankind over to a reprobate mind. As they did not wish to retain Him in their knowledge, He left them to their evil course, to pursue the lusts of their depraved minds, and to learn by sad experience the bitter fruitage of sin, and the misery, vanity and woe which it brings. Man's perverse heart must be broken, before he can be brought to a realization of his condition as declared by the Apostle in the words, "Without God, and having no hope in the world!" Humanity has had bitter experiences, and has gone down from one depth of depravity to another, until now mankind have become so alienated from God by wicked works and self-will that many do not know that there is a God. Others conjure up in their minds a demon, whom they worship as God. So the poor world is today in a sadly confused, benighted condition.

Many believe that there is some law of Nature, some law of development and progression; and thus they speak of Nature as God—an impersonal god. They cannot worship such a god; for an impersonal god could not sympathize with them nor deliver them from their troubles. The Bible, however, presents a God of intelligence, a God of sympathy, a God who cares for His creatures and who has a marvelous Plan for their restoration to His own glorious likeness. How glad we are that we know this loving, living God! How glad we are that He has let us into the secrets of His counsels, that He has made known His wonderful Plan to us in advance of the inauguration of the great work! How it rejoices our hearts, to know not only of our own glorious share and place in this great Plan, but to know also of the blessings so soon to come to the poor groaning creation!

Blessings Proportionate to Faith

In proportion as the people of God come into close heart-fellowship with Him, in proportion as they hear His voice speaking to them through the Prophets of old, through Jesus and His Apostles, and through His daily providences, they hear a good Message, a glorious Message, one that assures them of His loving sympathy, of His great Power and of His purpose to exercise that Power for the deliverance and blessing of all the world. As the Scriptures themselves assure us, it is a Message of "great joy to **all people.**" Some can believe and receive this Message of good more readily than can others, and the more fully one receives it the more fully he will be blessed. Both knowledge and faith are necessary for that blessing. Some have not now the capacity for faith and some have not the knowledge. Those who have no faith will have to wait over for the next Age.

Some can look out into the realms of space and by modern appliances and mathematical calculations determine the distance to the sun, the center of our own solar system. With the aid of the telescope they can sweep through the vast expanse of the Universe and see something of its grandeur and its glory. They can study the movements of the planets in their various orbits, and forecast their future positions. They can ascertain also that there is a vast system of systems in the great material Universe. Truly, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language. (But) their melody extendeth through all the earth, and to the end of the world their words!"—See Leeser and R. V.

But these wise men who study these wonderful works of the Almighty do not realize nor appreciate the love of God as manifested in His Son, our Redeemer. They have a certain knowledge of the Power of God, but very few of them appreciate His character. As the Apostle Paul has truly said: "In the Wisdom of God, the world through its **wisdom** knows not God." (1 Corinthians 1:21. R. V.) Jehovah does not purpose that any shall **know Him** save in **His own appointed way.** The wisdom of man **cannot** find Him out.

God is seeking only those who have the true wisdom, in that they realize their own insufficiency, their need of instruction and guidance, and who can exercise the necessary faith when the Message of God is brought to them. All others will be able to appreciate the Message in the incoming Age of Blessing. Those who are now too wise in their own conceits will be brought through humiliating experiences to a contrite and humble condition of mind. The credulous will be given the true knowledge which will lead to a real faith.

Many noble minds are filled with the wisdom of this world. They think of the mighty Universe with its millions upon millions of systems of worlds rolling through infinite space. They look at the earth, and think of the comparatively insignificant size of the little planet on which we live. By the power of the microscope, they examine the wonderful construction of plant and flower. They scrutinize the marvels of the structure of molecules and atoms of matter, and of midgets, mites and microbes. Then they shake their heads and say: "The idea that a God of such infinite Power would concern Himself about humanity! He is far too busy to trouble Himself about us!" These must wait a further and more favorable time for their enlightenment. The Lord can deal as yet only with those who have naturally some faith and who have gained a sufficient knowledge of Himself and of His character to believe in His love and to be desirous of coming into fellowship and communion with Him.

A Special Class Now Dealt With

The basis of the Apostle's argument in our text is that faith is the essential thing in coming to God. God will not receive any one who does not exercise faith. St. Paul recounts the faith of the worthies of old, who gained such victories through their faith, and who received the testimony that they pleased God. Then he declares that whoever would come to God **now** must **believe.** There are some who are drawn to the Lord, who desire to come to Him. There are others who desire to get away from Him as far as possible, and to keep away. These have no real knowledge of God, but are grossly blinded by "the god of this world." —2 Corinthians 4:3, 4.

The class referred to in our text as coming to God or as willing to come to Him, have a heart-hunger for their Creator—a longing for Him that nothing else can satisfy. They say to themselves, "There is a God who made me. The more I learn respecting the vast Universe and of my own anatomy, the more I see the Wisdom and the Power of God, and the more I realize my own littleness and weakness and need. For this great God my soul is crying out, and I have been told that He has made a revelation of Himself, that to certain Prophets of old He revealed the fact that He takes an interest in His human creatures. I mean to study what He has declared through these His servants. I am also told that He has revealed Himself and His love further through Jesus Christ His Son; and that this Son of God came to earth and died for sinful man that he might live. If God has really given man His Message, I want that Message; I will draw near to this God, that I also may receive His blessing."

The Lord encourages all such through His Word. He says,, "Draw nigh to Me, and I will draw nigh to you." And as these come, seeking to know His will, He becomes the Rewarder of their faith. He points them to the one who is the Propitiation for the sins of all who come to Him.

He makes known to them that those who come to Him through His appointed Channel may have the Savior as their Advocate, upon the terms of faith and consecration to lay down their lives in sacrifice with Him. Thus step by step they come into the fulness of salvation, and are accepted in the Beloved.

Credulity Not Faith

Many imagine that they have faith when in reality they have only credulity. Their so-called faith is not founded upon the Word of God and upon His promises. Such credulity will surely fail when the great testing time comes. Credulity is the acceptance of a thing without good reason, without sure evidence. Faith, on the contrary, is the acceptance of a thing because we have indisputable evidence of its reality, its truthfulness and its reliability. As we exercise faith in God, we come nearer and nearer to Him.

"According to your faith be it unto you," are the Master's words. Every exercise of faith is based upon something real and tangible to faith. There is a mental tangibility for faith and also a physical, or outward, tangibility. True wisdom searches out the two grounds for faith. "The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence Him; and He will show them His Covenant."

These increase in faith as they go on in the path of obedience. Faith and obedience are like our two feet. We put one forward, and then the other, and then the first one forward; and so we develop in faith by continuing in the spirit of obedience, following on wherever the Lord points the way. "We walk by faith and not by sight." But we have good, tangible evidences all along our Heavenward journey. Outside of all other evidences, the true Christian has in his own personal experiences abundant proof of our Father's love and care. The Master said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall upon the ground without your Father. . . . But ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Matthew 10:29.) As he progresses in the narrow way the child of God comes to learn the fulness of meaning in these words of our Lord.

Faith a Real Substance

So the Christian who walks closely with the Master finds the truth of the Apostle's words that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence [proof, conviction] of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1.) Faith is not only a groundwork, or basis, for our hopes (itself also having a groundwork in proven facts), but it is a real substance—a mental substance, so to speak, which stimulates and clarifies the mind. Faith is not a substance that we can hold in our hand or walk on with our feet. But it becomes a strength to our minds as we progress in the knowledge of God and of the things which God has to give to those who love Him above all else and who seek to render Him loving, devoted service. Faith becomes as real and tangible to us as any material substance—even more so; for the things upon which our faith lays hold are eternal.—Z. '15:197-199.

Quietness in the Midst of Storms

"When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?"
—Job 34: 29.

ELIHU, the speaker of these words, was a young man who lived in Job's day—supposedly in the time of Abraham. He was one of the four friends of Job who called upon him in his adversity to comfort him. Being the youngest of all, he hesitated to speak as freely as did the other three friends of Job. He had heard them speak, and had discerned where they had made mistakes.

The fact that certain words are recorded in the Bible does not necessarily mean that they are inspired of God or even that they are true. We remember having in our youth a discussion with some one who finally quoted us a passage of Scripture which seemed to be in conflict with all the other Scriptures. We said, "If that is Scripture, we would like to know it." Our opponent looked it up and found that it read, "And the Devil said," so and so. Surely there is no reason to believe that the Devil is inspired—no reason to believe that the Devil's words are inspired.

These words spoken by Elihu were as wise as any spoken by Job's comforters—probably wiser; but they were surely human wisdom, so far as we can discern. When Elihu put this question, "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" he was seeking to draw a line in this criticism of Job, being averse to an extreme position, yet agreeing neither with Job nor his other friends. Job's three friends had been arguing that he must have done some very wicked deeds, and that as a result his camels and his cattle were destroyed—in fact all of his property, everything he possessed, as well as his children. He had lost all his ten children and lost also the affection of his wife. And these comforters were trying to have him admit that he had committed some great crime and that God was angry with him. Still Job insisted that he had been doing his very best—not that he claimed to be perfect, but he had been striving to live a godly life, a just and honorable life.

Elihu's Sound Reasoning

So when Job had gotten through with his argument and his three friends had gotten through with theirs, Elihu said (we paraphrase), "Job, you admit that you are in trouble. Now if God had given you quietness, who could make you trouble? He has surely purposed that this trouble come upon you."

Elihu defended God. He claimed that the Lord had evidently designed that Job should not have peace and prosperity longer; otherwise these adversities could not have come upon him. Whatever was the reason for it. Job's calamity evidently was not accidental. There must have been a Divine hand in the matter. Even if Satan had sent all these difficulties and trials, he could not have done so unless God had permitted it. No one could have thwarted the Divine arrangement and will. Elihu contended with Job that the Lord had the right and the power to decide, that Job had not. He showed distinctly the Power and the rightful authority of God to order in all the affairs of life, and incidentally showed that Job was more righteous than all his associates; that while he was a sinner, yet not on this account was he being afflicted.

We may profitably get a thought from this discourse given by Elihu. Here is a process of reasoning used by a man away back in the past—about the time that the Evolutionists tell us man was a monkey. Pretty sound reasoning for a monkey! Many of our college presidents would do no better today. It is sound logic.

Affliction No Proof of God's Disfavor

We also see that Job was not a great sinner. On the contrary, we have every reason to believe that he was a true Prophet of God, a true servant of God. He was one whom the Bible tells us God especially loved. This is shown in Ezekiel 14:19, 20. "If I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out My fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast, though Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness." Again, the Apostle says, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." —James 5:11.

It is quite true that Job's trouble could not have come upon him if God had not permitted it. If God had wished him to have quietness, no one could have made him trouble. But He permitted trial to come to test His servant, just as He permits trouble to come upon His Church, and as He permitted it to come upon His well-beloved Son. He permitted that men should do all manner of evil against His Son—should scoff at Him, should spit upon Him, should smite Him, should scourge Him, and finally crucify Him. The Lord has not always given quietness in these cases, but often trouble.

The lesson of the text for those who have put themselves in God's care, is that no one can make them trouble without Divine permission. The Lord tells us that He will make all things work together for good to His children, and that He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear. (1 Corinthians 10:13.) In our Lord's case it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, to allow suffering and death to come upon Him. (Isaiah 53:10.) It pleased God to adopt this Plan for the recovery of the world, because it best illustrates His Justice, His Wisdom, His Love and His Power. It also resulted in great honor and glory to our Lord Jesus.

As concerns the Lord's people, there might be certain matters relating to dispensational changes that could best be accomplished through severe trials coming upon them. Then, additionally, God wishes certain trials to come upon His people because He desires them to trust Him where they cannot trace Him. He wishes them to have unwavering faith in Him. The children of God, then, can take these words of our text in a very different way from that originally suggested to Job by Elihu. We may truly say, "When God giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" We recognize that there is a certain quietness and rest of heart that all the Lord's saints may enjoy. We realize this even when He permits severe trouble.

The Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews says, "We who have believed do enter into rest." We enter into rest by coming into the attitude where we can believe, where we can and do exercise entire trust in God. Sometimes outward difficulties are helpful in overcoming a wrong spirit. The Lord's people are not discouraged by the things that would utterly crush out the vitality and courage of others. They get the wrong spirit pounded out of them; but it is the hand of love that administers the blows, and the Lord knows just how many and how severe ones are needed.

Kept in Perfect Peace

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee." (Isaiah 26:3.) This thought is very precious to us as New Creatures. "The peace of God which passeth all understanding," is to rule and keep our minds and hearts. (Philippians 4:7.) We are to count the things of the present life as not worthy of comparison with the glories of eternity. And so the Apostle says, "For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:17, 18.) When our minds are stayed on the Lord, and we take the proper view of our experiences, we can sing with the poet:

"No storm can shake our inmost calm,
While to this Refuge clinging."

We have peace, no matter what the outward conditions may be. The trials and difficulties of life come to the Lord's people commingled with joys—the rain and storm, then the sunshine. They enjoy all righteous pleasures that are in harmony with their consecration. They learn to cultivate patience in trial, knowing that patience works out experience, and experience works out more and more that hope which maketh not ashamed.—Romans 5:3-5.

So, then, it is to the Christian that our text brings the assurance that when God gives quietness, none can make trouble. They "shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake," said the Master, but then we are to "rejoice and be exceeding glad." "Let not your heart be troubled." (Matthew 5:11; John 14:1.) We think our text very precious when viewed from our standpoint.

Trouble Necessary to Our Proving

Our Heavenly Father designs that various kinds of trouble shall come upon us, that these may develop and prove our characters. It is a part of the Divine Plan to permit us to have experiences of affliction. (Psalm 119:67, 71, 75; 34:19, 20.) So when we see God's people in trouble or trial today we are not to say that God is against them. We are each to demonstrate our willingness to suffer according to His will, and often to suffer unjustly. Our Lord set us an example of cheerful, patient submission to God's will. We are to walk in His footsteps. And we have the example of the Apostles, when trials and difficulties and persecutions came upon them; and the example of other saints all down the Age.

Trouble is not necessarily a sign of the disfavor of God. On the contrary, we know that "many are the afflictions of the righteous," and that "**All** that will live godly in Christ Jesus **shall** suffer persecution." The **Truth** will cost them something. **Faithfulness to the Lord** will cost them much. As the Apostle says, "If ye be without chastisement [discipline, training], then are ye bastards and not sons." (Hebrews 2:8.) If God gives peace of heart, who can upset the one who is thus in harmony with God, in whom this peace of heart is ruling? This, then, is the greatest blessing of all. And He grants this peace to those who are faithfully striving to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. We have a Refuge which none but His own can know. No harm can reach us within this Shelter; no storm can shake us from our moorings, for we are securely anchored to the Rock of Ages. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to the called according to His Purpose." (Romans 8:28.) And as Job's **after** blessings far outweighed his brief trials, so it will be with the Lord's saints today.

> "What though my joys and comfort die!
> The Lord, my Savior, liveth;
> What though the darkness gather round!
> Songs in the night He giveth.
> No storm can shake my inmost calm,
> While to that Refuge clinging;
> Since Christ is Lord of Heaven and earth,
> How can I keep from singing?"

—Z. '16:101, 102.

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The prepared instruments of the Lord are powerful in his hand.—Z. '96:11.

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How important it is that all who have named the name of Christ, who have entered His School, should apply themselves well to the lessons set for us by our great Teacher! How important it is that we who have made a covenant with the Lord, should walk worthy of our great vocation, and not be a reproach to Him whose Cause we have espoused! There are no people upon the face of the earth who should so exemplify in their daily walk and conversation the precious fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit of God as should those who have been led out of darkness into the marvelous light of the Lord. We believe that we are earnestly desirous of thus glorifying our Lord and of showing Him our gratitude and appreciation for His loving-kindness to us.—Z. '16:327.

◆

Blessed were those disciples of old, and blessed are the disciples of today! The blessing then was largely dependent upon the nearness of the disciples to the Lord, and the nearness was marked largely by the degree of zeal and devotion; and thus we must expect it to be today. It was Peter, James and John, who were the most zealous of the apostles, that had the special favors when such were to be given. And so it is today; those who most cheerfully, most zealously forget self and earthly ambitions, aims and projects, and who most fully give themselves to the Lord and to his service, these may walk nearest to the Lord at all times; these may go with him to the Mount; these may be special witnesses of his powers, and these in special times may be close to the Lord. Some, like John, may not only sit at meat with him, but sit next to him—in his bosom. In proportion as our lives are copies of the Lord's, all the time and influence at our disposal, outside of necessary obligations for things needful to ourselves and families, will be spent as he spent his time—in doing good unto all men, especially unto the household of faith.—Z. '04:79.

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Having received favors of knowledge and grace, our use of them becomes the test of our loyalty and faithfulness.—Z. '92:25.

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The Lord is both able and willing to use in His service the humble ones who are ready and willing.—Z. '16:91. 2118

◆

At various steps in the journey of life the Lord brings us to the place where he tests our faith. If we exercise the faith we will get the blessing; if we do not, we will lose it. "Without faith it is impossible to please God."—Z. '98:192.

DATE OF THE MEMORIAL SUPPER

The "Standfast" Brethren will celebrate the Memorial Supper of our Lord this year on April 16th, after 6 p.m.

No doubt all will endeavor to prepare their hearts and minds for a special blessing by thoughtful prayer and study, realizing that this coming Passover time will possibly be the most momentous one of their lives.

Published by the Standfast Bible Students. Address all communications: Standfast Bible Students, Scott Building, 2659 Douglas Street, Victoria, B. C.

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Old Corn Gems

No. 125

"And they did eat of the OLD CORN of the land on the morrow after the Passover . . . and the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the OLD CORN of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." Joshua 5:11-12.

A SAFE RULE

"WHERE A BROTHER GIVES AN INTERPRETATION OF A SCRIPTURE WHICH DIFFERS FROM THAT GIVEN BY BROTHER RUSSELL AND BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION SEEMS REASONABLE AND IN HARMONY WITH THE PLAN OF GOD, THEN WE BELIEVE IT A SAFE RULE TO FOLLOW BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION, FOR THE REASON THAT HE IS THE SERVANT OF THE CHURCH, SO CONSTITUTED BY THE LORD FOR THE LAODICEAN PERIOD; AND THEREFORE WE SHOULD EXPECT THE LORD TO TEACH US THROUGH HIM. WHERE THERE ARISES A DOUBT IN THE MIND AS TO WHICH INTERPRETATION IS CORRECT, THEN IT IS ALWAYS SAFER TO RESOLVE THAT DOUBT IN FAVOR OF BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION. WE BELIEVE SUCH TO BE IN HARMONY WITH THE LORD'S WILL."—Z. '18: 51.

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"Let Patience Have Her Perfect Work"

"Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."—Jas. 1:4.

THE term "patience" carries with it the thought of meek, uncomplaining endurance of suffering with humble resignation and perseverance. It is a trait which indicates strength and self-discipline. It cannot be predicated of inexperienced persons, but only of characters which have been subjected to trials of affliction, pain or loss; and it always shines brightest when manifested under the glowing heat of severe affliction. This trait takes a very prominent place in the galaxy of Christian virtues; for without it the heart would grow faint, the head weary; and the steps would soon falter along the narrow way in which the Church is called to walk. "In your patience possess ye your souls," said the Master, implying the danger of losing our souls, our existence, if we fail to cultivate this grace which is so very necessary to our continuance in well doing.

The Apostle James does not overstate the matter when he intimates that the perfect work of patience will make its subjects perfect and entire, wanting nothing; for the Apostle Paul assures us that God, who has begun the good work of developing character in us, will continue to perform it until the crowning day—the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6.) All his children will be subjected to just such discipline as they need for the correction of faults, the implanting and development of virtues, and for their training and establishment in righteousness, so that they cannot be moved. "If ye be without chastisement [discipline and correction], whereof all [true sons of God] are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye [patiently] endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"—Heb. 12:8, 6, 7.

This great work of developing and training character is necessarily a slow and tedious one, and not infrequently it is a painful process; and the patience that cheerfully submits to it is begotten of a high appreciation of the ends to be attained by it. It is begotten of a love of righteousness, truth and godliness, and is therefore most noble and praiseworthy.

But how can we let patience have her perfect work? Just by meekly doing the best we can each day, and doing it cheerfully and well, making the best of every thing and going forward daily with true Christian fortitude to act the noble part in every emergency of affliction, pain or loss. Today's trial may be a light one, perhaps almost imperceptible; or today may be one of the sunny days in which God bids our hearts rejoice in his overflowing bounty. Tomorrow may bring its cares and its petty vexations that irritate and annoy. Another tomorrow may witness the clouds gather above our heads, and as the days follow each other the clouds may grow darker and darker until we are forcibly reminded of that strong figure of the Psalmist—"I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." Yet never will the valley grow so dark that the patient, trusting one cannot triumphantly exclaim, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou [my Lord] art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Yes, there is comfort in the "rod" (of chastisement), as well as in the "staff" (of providential care); for both are designed for our ultimate profiting.

The Apostle Paul tells us plainly that tribulation is necessary for the development of patience—"Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." (Rom. 5:3, 4.) Consider how your own experience has verified this, you who have been for some time under the Lord's special care and leading. How much richer you are for all the lessons of experience, and for the patience that experience has developed in you! Although, like the Apostle, you can say that "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. 12:11.) In the exercise of patience the lessons of experience have made you stronger. They have increased your faith and drawn you into closer communion and fellowship with the Lord. They have made you feel better acquainted with and to realize more and more his personal interest in you and his care and love for you. And this in turn has awakened a deeper sense of gratitude and an increasing zeal to manifest that gratitude to him. This also deepens the sense of fellowship with God, and gives confidence to the hope of final and full acceptance with him as a son and heir, worthy through Christ.

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down and [strengthen] the feeble knees"—"Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

The Apostle James urges that we take the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example of suffering affliction and of patience. Then he cites the example of Job and the manifest end or purpose of the Lord in permitting him to be so sorely tried: how the Lord was really very pitiful and of tender mercy, although the pity and mercy were not manifest except to the confiding faith that said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"—until the long and painful discipline had yielded the peaceable fruits and the subsequent rewards of righteousness.

There is little virtue in the patience that endures merely from motives of worldly policy, though even that often has much advantage in it. Men in business dealings with fellowmen well know that an impetuous, turbulent disposition is greatly to their disadvantage, while patient consideration, temperance in judgment, and good self-control are of immense value, even from a worldly, business standpoint. But the patience that is begotten of deep-rooted Christian principle is the kind that will endure all trials and shine the brighter for every affliction through which it may pass.

Job, the servant of God, was accused of selfish policy-motives for his remarkable patience and faithfulness; and it was boldly affirmed that if he were tried by adversity his mean motives would be manifest—that he would curse God to his face. But God knew better; and it was in Job's defence that he permitted him to be tried to the utmost that the loyalty of his heart might be manifest. Some of his poor comforters viewed Job's afflictions only in the light of chastisements, failing utterly to comprehend the divine purpose, and this only added stings to his afflictions; but through them all the Lord brought his servant and most fully vindicated him in the eyes of all the people.

Thus will he ever do with all who patiently maintain their integrity and trust in God under affliction. If any man recognize affliction as a chastisement of the Lord for the correction of some evil way in him, let him be quick to learn the lesson and repent; or if it be refining discipline, let patience under the tedious process have its perfect work.

The Apostle Paul (Heb. 11) calls up a long list of patient, faithful ones who endured cruel mockings and scourgings, bonds and imprisonment, who were stoned, sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, who wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy; who wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. All this they endured patiently for righteousness' sake, looking by faith to God for the reward of their patience and faithfulness in his own good time. Then again, says the Apostle (Heb. 12:3), "Consider him [Christ] that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Yea, consider him, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." He left us an example that we should follow his steps.

While we see the great necessity for pruning, cultivating and discipline in the development of character, it is manifest that none will be able to endure it unto the desirable end of final establishment in righteousness who do not from the beginning diligently devote themselves to the exercise of patience. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." "In your patience possess ye your souls."—Z. '94:332-334.

Jesus Said Unto Him, Follow Me

Mark 2:13-22.

CAPERNAUM, where our Lord had been teaching and healing, was situated on the sea of Galilee, or, as we today should say, the Lake of Galilee. It was a city of considerable commercial importance, especially for the fish business, and undoubtedly the lake-shore in that vicinity was quite populous. The tense of the Greek would seem to indicate that our Lord kept going by the sea-shore, stopping here and there to discourse to the people, multitudes of whom flocked to hear him. It was during this journey that he passed Matthew, formerly known as Levi, a custom-house agent of the Roman government—a revenue collector, who was attending to his business, and whom our Lord addressed, saying, "Follow me," and who obeyed the call to discipleship.

Many get a very false thought from the brevity of the narrative, and infer that Levi (Matthew) had never heard of Jesus before, and that our Lord, as he passed him, cast upon him some kind of a spell which led him to instantly drop his business, as though bereft of his senses. On the contrary, we are to remember that the Lord and his disciples were well known in that vicinity for years, and that probably Matthew had not only knowledge of our Lord, but also faith in him, as the Messiah. Not until now, however, had Jesus invited him to become one of His immediate disciples; not until now, therefore, could Matthew essay to become such. There evidently were many who heard the Lord discourse time and again, and who were to be reckoned as amongst his friends, but who were by no means invited to become special followers, companions and associates in the ministry of the gospel, as were the Twelve.

Nor are we to suppose that Matthew left his money-drawer open, and his accounts with the Roman government unsettled, to immediately follow the Master. Rather, we may assume that it may have taken days, or possibly weeks, to straighten his affairs and to enable him to respond to the Lord's call to apostleship. We should remember that the history of several years, and many discourses, conversations and incidents, are crowded in the gospel narrative into very brief space.

It would seem probable that as Simon's name was changed by the Lord to Peter, so Levi's name was changed to Matthew, which signifies "the gift of God." He was a publican—a person who farmed the taxes and the public revenue. The name "publican" and the profession were both extremely odious to the Jews, who very reluctantly submitted themselves to the tax regulations of the Romans. Publicans were counted unpatriotic, disloyal to their own nation, in that they accepted the service of an alien government, and made use of their knowledge of their country and people in assisting to collect revenues deemed unjust. The office, as will be readily seen, offered many opportunities for dishonesty and extortion, bribery, etc., but we cannot for a moment suppose that Levi was one of these dishonest publicans, for had he been so we may be sure he would not have been called to the apostleship and would not have responded to the call, for we are not to forget that it is written, "No man can come to me except the Father which sent me draw him."—John 6:44.

The Consecrated Home Honored

Matthew was a man of influence, and as soon as he accepted the Lord's call, and responded by consecrating himself and his all, he set about to use his influence in drawing others to the Savior. He would announce his own devotion to the cause in such a manner and under such favorable circumstances as if possible would win some. To these ends he arranged a banquet for the Lord and his disciples at his house, and invited many of his friends and business associates. These in our lesson are called "Many publicans and sinners."

We have seen why the publicans were ostracised by the scribes and Pharisees — not because they were wicked, but because their business was disesteemed: and being thus cut off socially from the ultra-religious, the publicans were forced to have most of their social intercourse with the non-religious, by way of contrast called "sinners." By the term sinners we are not necessarily to understand vile persons and evildoers, but rather persons who did not profess nor attempt the holiness claimed by the Pharisees — persons who did not claim to be absolute keepers of the divine Law—who did not profess to make the outside of the cup or platter absolutely clean, though perhaps in many instances the inside was as clean or more clean than were the hearts of the Pharisees, who professed perfect holiness. This our Lord intimated on several occasions. When, therefore, we read that our Lord was the friend of publicans and sinners we are not to understand that he made companions of the rowdies or moral lepers of his time. We are rather to understand that in the usage of that time one class of Jews was designated the holy people (Pharisees), and another class designated as not professing absolute holiness (sinners).

Matthew's endeavor to bring his friends and associates into contact with the Master and his teachings is certainly commendable. . . . The homes of those who have consecrated themselves to the Lord should be consecrated homes, in which the first consideration should be the service of the Master; and its influence should be to draw out friends to the Lord, that they might be taught of him. Too frequently the consecration of the home is overlooked and antagonistic influences are permitted to dominate, with the result that neither the Lord nor the Lord's people are entertained, nor his cause served in them. Such a house and home loses a great blessing, and the head of such a house has serious reason to question whether or not he is overcoming, and therefore an "overcomer," to whom only the prize is promised,—or whether he is being overcome by adverse influences.

The Lord desires a courageous people, a people so full of faith, and love to him and his, that they will conquer adverse influences in the interest of righteousness. What would we think of Matthew if he had said to the Lord: Master, I would much like to have a banquet at my home, and to invite there some of my friends, that I might introduce you to them, and that thus a favorable influence might be exerted on behalf of the truth; but I have no liberty in my own home—my wife would not hear of it for a moment,—or, my children are unruly, have no respect for me as a parent, and would create a great disturbance if I were to mention such a thing as a banquet in your honor, so greatly are they offended that I am giving up my lucrative business, and so fearful are they that they will not have the same social standing as before, or the same privileges of extravagance?

We would consider him a most unfit man to be an apostle, or to occupy even the position of elder or deacon in the Church, according to the terms laid down by the Apostle Paul. (I Tim. 3:4, 5.) We would esteem such an one unworthy of any responsible position in the Church, and so deficient in the qualities of an "overcomer" that he would be in great danger of losing the prize, unless he promptly instituted a reform of his character. It is only what we should expect, to find Matthew's case very different from this—to find that he had a strong character. Nor can we expect that the Master would have said to him, "Follow me," unless he had such character that would permit him to follow in the Master's footsteps, for surely our Lord Jesus, while gentle, kind and loving, was never weak or characterless.

And what would we have thought of Matthew's wife and family, had they objected to the banquet? We would have considered them rather hopeless as respects saintship, and that his wife had not learned even the first element of wifehood;—that she was a hinderer instead of a helping mate. As it was we may be assured that with the Lord came a special blessing to that home.

Spiritual Food at the Banquet

It would seem from other narratives of this same banquet (which was probably several weeks after Matthew's call) that a large number of people were gathered at Matthew's house, aside from those who partook of the banquet (Luke 5:29), and from the connection of the narrative it is supposed that it was on one of the regular fast days of the Pharisees. These facts led to the two questions:

(1) Why does your Teacher associate with these people, who do not profess sanctification? The objection was not that our Lord should not teach the publicans and sinners, but that he should not eat with them, which implied a social equality, and the Pharisees evidently recognized that our Lord and his apostles were professing and living lives of entire consecration to God.

In answer to this query our Lord said, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick"; the implication being that the physician had a right to go to and mingle with those whom he sought to relieve, and might mingle with them in whatever manner he saw to be expedient for their cure. This language does not imply that the Pharisees were not sick, and that they did not need our Lord's ministry, though the fact was that not admitting that they were sin-sick they were not disposed to receive his good medicine of doctrine. The same thought is otherwise expressed by our Lord in the same connection, saying, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Anyone who considered himself to be righteous would be beyond the call of repentance. His first lesson would be to learn that he was not righteous, not perfect; hence our Lord went chiefly to those who admitted that they were not righteous, and whose hearts therefore were better soil for the truth than others. Our Lord intimated this in his parable of the publicans and the Pharisee's prayers, assuring us that in God's sight the publican had the better standing, because of his acknowledgment of imperfections and his petition for mercy.

Another of the Evangelists adds others of our Lord's words—"Go ye and learn what that meaneth: I will have mercy and not sacrifice." (Matt. 9:13.) Our Lord here evidently quoted from Hosea 6:6. The lesson the Pharisees should have learned from this was that in their particularity respecting sacrifices, self-denials, tithing of mint, anise, cummin, etc., the very things in which they boasted as evidences of their holiness were things which God did not appreciate nearly so much as he would have appreciated mercy. They should have had compassionate feelings toward their fellow Jews, the yearning compassion which would have delighted to have lifted them out of sin and brought them nearer to the Lord and nearer to righteous influences. Instead of having this spirit of mercy, which would have been very pleasing in God's sight, and would have prepared them to be recipients of his mercy, they had instead a loveless sentiment which despised others and boasted of self, —a self-satisfied and complacent condition of mind and heart, very reprehensible to the Lord—a condition of heart unready to be blessed with divine mercy.

Fasting and Feasting—Typical and Antitypical

(2) The next question was: Why is it that your Master and all who affiliate with him are banqueting and feasting and rejoicing, while we Pharisees "fast twice in the week," and the followers of John's teachings also fast? Is not this a sign that you and your Master are not so devout as we?—Luke 18:12.

The Lord's answer is very comprehensive and far-reaching, and requires considerable study to be appreciated. He explained:—

That it would be inappropriate for his followers to be in sadness and mourning at a time when they were receiving such wonderful blessings—at a time when the Bridegroom himself was present, cheering their hearts, refreshing and strengthening them, opening the eyes of their understanding, and giving them hearing ears to appreciate the divine favor that was coming unto them. Such would not be an appropriate time for fasting and mourning. By and by, when the Bridegroom would be away, there would be an abundance of perplexity and sorrow and then fasting would be in order. And so surely it has been: the Lord's people throughout the Gospel age have frequently felt called upon in times of darkness and adversity to seek a very close approach to the Lord by the humbling of the flesh, and have found fasting a valuable means to this end.

But fasting has a typical significance—it means self-denial. So long as the Master was with his people, and especially so long as he was honored by the multitudes, it required comparatively little self-denial to be one of his followers—it was in many respects an honor to be called to follow him, and an honor to sacrifice something of earthly interests to be a follower; and this made this kind of self-denial or fasting really a feast of pleasure. But later on trials came, when the Master got into the toils of his enemies, when his cause was unpopular, and the multitudes clamored for his death —then it required self-denial (antitypical fasting) to confess him and follow him; and so it has been all through the Gospel age—none can be a follower of the Lamb without self-denial, fasting, refusing the desires and appetites of the flesh—sacrificing some and mortifying others in the interest of the new creature and its spiritual development.

Now, in the Lord's Second Presence, we might say that the feast has begun again—that from a spiritual standpoint there are so many and so great blessings, so much and so dainty spiritual food, that to those who are invited into the Lord's banqueting house and whom he causes to sit down to meat, and to whom he brings forth things new and old, newly and refreshingly served, it almost appears as though the fasting time has passed, and that the feasting and "joys of the Lord" have begun. Not that there are no trials and difficulties, according to the flesh, but that as new creatures his people are so refreshed and exhilarated with the meat in due season that the trials and difficulties and self-denials (fastings) incidental to the way may now be esteemed so lightly as not to be worthy to be compared with the spiritual refreshments enjoyed, though these be but foretastes of the great Marriage Feast soon to be enjoyed.—Z. '00:77-79.

The Lord's Sheep

THE Lord, in calling his people his sheep, chose a very significant emblem of the character he would have manifested in them. The most noticeable characteristics of the sheep are meekness, docility and obedience to the shepherd to whose care they fully entrust themselves. They are very true to the shepherd: they study his voice, watch for the indications of his will, and trustfully obey him. When they hear his voice, quickly, and without the slightest hesitation or faltering, they run to obey it. But the voice of a stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers.

What a lesson is here for the Lord's flock, over whom he is the good Shepherd. The weakest lamb in the flock knows his voice and hears him say, "This is the way: walk ye in it." And while there are thousands of voices calling, now in this direction and now in that, the Lord's sheep, acquainted with his Spirit and his Word, turn away from all save the well known voice of the Shepherd. In various ways our Shepherd speaks to his flock of sheep and lambs. His written words treasured up in the heart mark the way of truth continually; his special providences further shape the peculiar course of each individual; and the abiding presence of his holy Spirit makes manifest every intrusion of any other spirit which seeks to beguile and to lead astray. The true sheep will carefully listen for the faintest accents of the voice of the Shepherd—i.e., he will treasure up his words in his heart; he will study his providences; and he will cultivate that communion and personal fellowship with the Lord which are his privilege. Those who thus abide in him can never go astray.

"They can never, never lose their way."

They may not have much learning, and, humanly speaking, would not be able to grapple with all the sophistries of error. But, being so well acquainted with the Master's voice, they quickly perceive that such voices are the voices of strangers, and they will not follow them; for they are loyal and obedient to the Shepherd only.

In such an attitude of mind and heart is our only safety in the midst of all the difficulties and confusion of this evil day. And all such may confidently sing with the Psalmist—

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down [to rest—the rest of faith] in green pastures [with abundance of satisfying food]; he leadeth me beside the still waters [deep, refreshing truths]. He restoreth my soul [reclaims it from death]; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake [because I am his child and bear his honored name]. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death [The entire journey of life since the fall has been through a vale of tears, upon which rests the shadow of death], I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Thy word and providences discipline and guide me in the way. Our Shepherd's providence not only disciplines the true sheep, but protects them from the "wolves" and other foes.

With the Prophet, we also can say, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies [for even while beset by Satan and Sin, we are sustained by the Lord's abundant provision for every necessity]; thou anointest my head with [the] oil [of joy], my cup [pleasure] runneth over [even while, as a pilgrim, I am beset with life's difficulties]." And, in view of the Lord's present and past leading, all, who continue to be truly his sheep, can certainly trust that—"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me, all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord [will be recognized as a member of his household, as his child] forever."

Let us seek to cultivate more and more the meek, docile and loyal character of the sheep, that so we may be abundantly blessed by the care of the good Shepherd. Such a disposition does not commend itself to the world—the wayward goat, the bold lion, or the stealthy bear, the subtle serpent and vicious vampires are more fitting emblems of their ideals, and are usually the emblems selected for their escutcheons. But let the world love its own, while we remember that we are not of the world, but are sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, and that our safety and spiritual prosperity depend, not upon our own wisdom and sagacity, but depend entirely upon our diligent hearkening to, and patient following of, the voice of the good Shepherd, who will very soon highly exalt his flock and crown them with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.—Z. '93:165, 166.

"Who Shall Ascend"

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek the face of the God of Jacob."—Psa. 24: 3-6.

IN this psalm the prophet David takes the standpoint of the dawn of the Millennial age, when, after the great time of trouble, the kingdoms of this world will have become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ (Rev. 11: 15),—when the "Times of the Gentiles" will have been fulfilled, and "he whose right it is" will have taken unto him his great power and begun his glorious reign. Those who have studied the plan of the ages and its times and seasons know that this is due to be accomplished in the year 1925,—only a few months future from the present time. Then will the words of this prophecy be fulfilled—"The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein; for he hath founded it upon [instead of] the seas, and established it upon [in place of] the floods."—Verses 1, 2.

The earth, the world, the seas and the floods, the hills and the mountains are all used here, as in numerous other instances, in a symbolic, and not in a literal sense, which would be absurd in this connection. The earth and the world represent the present social order of things, or human society as at present organized. The seas and the floods represent an increasingly large class of mankind which restlessly recoils against the restraints of the present social order and at times grows turbulent and threatening. The hills and mountains represent governments.

When the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, it will not be because all the kingdoms of this world will have been converted to God and purified, and their kings permitted to reign by the grace of God, as they now claim to do, and because all the now restless masses of men will have become docile and submissive to the present governing powers; but it will be as the prophet declares, because God will have "founded it upon the seas and established it upon the floods." That is, the present earth, or social organization, and the present heavens, or ruling powers, will have passed away, and the new earth will be established upon the ruins of the old. When the waves of the restless sea-element of society shall have arisen in their might and overwhelmed the whole present social order, so that the wild and stormy sea of anarchy shall prevail everywhere, then, amidst the wreck and ruin, the desolation and universal despondency and despair, the voice of Jehovah will be heard, saying, "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." (Psa. 46:10.) And out of the wild commotion of that stormy sea God will bring order and peace.

Instead of this restless sea of humanity he will found the new earth, the new order of things; yea, and he will firmly establish it upon [in place of] the floods: there he will establish his Kingdom "which cannot be moved." (Heb. 12:28.) And he will set his King upon his holy hill of Zion, and give to him the nations for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. (Psa. 2:6, 8.) Then indeed shall the King, the Lord's anointed, reign in righteousness; and princes shall decree justice (Isa. 32:1); and, in consequence, there shall be abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.—Psa. 72:7.

There will then be but one Kingdom (mountain or hill) in all the world—the Kingdom of God; and his Anointed will be King in all the earth in that day. (Zech. 14:9.) This hill or kingdom of the Lord is that to which the Psalmist refers when he raises the question, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?" To ascend into the hill of the Lord is to come into his Kingdom as loyal and obedient subjects, as true citizens, worthy of all its blessings and privileges, and not as aliens and foreigners, having no part or lot in the common interests and inheritance of all the true and loyal people of God, viz., eternal life and all its blessings of righteousness, peace and everlasting joy. Who indeed shall be counted worthy thus to ascend into the mountain of the Lord? "And who shall stand in his holy place?" The reference here is to the antitype of the typical temple of God, which, standing upon the top of Mount Zion, prefigured the glorious true temple, the Church of the living God, in Kingdom power and glory. Who shall stand in that holy place in that age of glory and blessing now so near at hand? — who shall be counted worthy to reign with Christ in his Kingdom?

The answer to both inquiries is the same—"He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." These will be the required qualifications for citizenship in the Kingdom, when the Kingdom is established; and they are also the qualifications required now of all those who would be heirs of that coming Kingdom. It will be observed that the qualifications mentioned are not those of faith (for faith in the gospel of the Kingdom, which includes faith in Christ the King and Redeemer, is implied in the desire to be in the Kingdom in any capacity); but the qualifications mentioned here are those of character. The Scriptures elsewhere make more specific mention of the necessary faith, but always implying a character consistent with the faith. (Acts 16:31; John 3:16, 36.) The prophet does not ignore faith, but points to that character which is the legitimate consequence of a true faith exercised unto godliness. A faith which does not produce character is null and void. (Jas. 2:17.) Therefore it is plain that both the heirs and the subjects of the Kingdom of God must have that character which is both begotten and developed by the faith of the gospel; for if the faith of the gospel be held in unrighteousness there is no place in the Kingdom for any such. (Rom. 1:18.) Let us consider the character-requirements here mentioned.

"Clean hands"—That means clean actions, clean conduct. If bad habits of any kind have been cultivated, they must be promptly forsaken. The hands must not be defiled with the holding of bribes, nor with the gain of oppression, and every evil thing must be resolutely put away. (Isa. 33:15.) It is in vain that any profess loyalty to God and to his anointed King and Kingdom while they continue in a sinful course of action. Loyalty to the Kingdom signifies determined opposition to sin in all its forms, and a firm resistance of it.

"A pure heart."—That signifies purity of will, intention or purpose, which, like the needle to the pole, always turns toward righteousness. Though some sudden or strong temptation may for an instant, through the weakness of the flesh, draw it to the right or to the left, yet quickly it recovers its normal position which is true to righteousness and truth. A pure heart loves righteousness and truth, and hates iniquity. It loves purity, and despises all that is impure and unholy. It loves cleanliness of person, of clothing, of language and of habits. It delights only in the society of the pure, and shuns all others, knowing that "evil communications corrupt good manners."

"Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity." Pride is an abomination to the Lord and to all those who partake of his spirit. It is a weed which, if once permitted to take root in the heart, will soon crowd out every grace. The Psalmist says, "I hate vain thoughts"; and such should be our sentiments. The grace of humility, meekness, is one of the most beautiful that can adorn the character. It takes a sober estimate of personal qualifications, is not puffed up, does not behave unbecomingly, and seeks to exercise its talents, not for pride and vain glory, but for the joy of doing good. It is modest, candid and sincere, both in consideration of its own qualifications and those of others. What comfort and pleasure are found in the society of those possessed of such a spirit.

"Nor sworn deceitfully."—Those who make a solemn covenant with the Lord, and who thereafter wilfully despise or ignore it, have sworn deceitfully; and surely no such disloyal subjects can be admitted either to citizenship or heirship in the Kingdom of God. But those who, in this past age, have made a solemn covenant with God and who are true to their covenant, even unto death, they shall ascend into the holy place, the temple of God—they shall be the heirs of the Kingdom, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ; while all such, in the age to come, shall be recognized and privileged citizens of the Kingdom. These shall receive the blessings of the Lord promised in his Word. After first receiving the imputed righteousness of Christ through faith, they may, under divine grace, be made perfect in righteousness and worthy of eternal life.

This is the generation of them that seek the face of the God of Jacob. Men do not obtain these blessings without seeking them, nor without seeking them in God's appointed way—through Christ, by humble reliance upon his finished work of redemption, and by the full consecration of all their ransomed powers of mind and body to his holy will, which is only our reasonable service.

Beloved, ye who are called by his grace to stand in his holy place, let us ponder these things. Are our hands clean and our hearts pure? are we humble and faithful to our covenant? Let us see that we meet these conditions, and let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus. —Z. '94: 387-389.

Vessels Unto Honor

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."—2 Tim. 2: 21.

IT is important to notice that this instruction is given, not to the world, but to the Church—to those who are believers in Christ and who are consecrated to him and desirous of being used in his service. If the counsel were given to worldly people, no such incentive would be held out; for such have no ambition to be in the Lord's service. The world can better appreciate such maxims as, "Honesty is the best policy," etc.; for temporal good is all they seek. Yet it is indeed a good thing for worldly men to purge themselves of evil dispositions and practices. Moral reforms are always commendable as steps in the right direction, and we are always glad to see worldly men trying to break away from the bondage of bad habits—from the drink habit and from lying, profanity and other vices.

2 But such purging from the filth of the flesh can never render such vessels fit for the Master's use. With all their efforts at cleansing they are still unclean, and the Lord desires clean vessels for his use. It is only when, by faith, we are plunged in the cleansing blood of our Redeemer that we are clean and acceptable to God.

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

3 But having been thus reckonedly cleansed from sin and clothed in the pure robe of Christ's righteousness, it is all-important that we strive to make this reckoned righteousness an actual thing to the extent of our ability; for only so can we prove ourselves worthy of the imputed righteousness. It is purely of divine grace that we are reckoned of God as righteous, before we have actually become so. Seeing in us the desire to be righteous and the effort to be so in his appointed way, God, accepting the will for the deed, reckons us righteous now, and treats us as sons, since we have been redeemed from the curse and have accepted this gracious provision for reconciliation.

4 If, however, after being thus reconciled to God and reckoned righteous, our course of conduct proves that we no longer love righteousness; if we do not endeavor to make the reckoned righteousness an actual thing by a constant endeavor to purge out the old leaven of sin; if we are content to let it remain and to work in us, and if we neglect to strive against it, then we are proving by such a course that our love of righteousness is growing weaker, and we are proving our unworthiness of the Lord's gracious reckoning in our favor. But if, on the contrary, we are striving daily to purge out the old leaven of sin,—not merely working it down occasionally and allowing it again and again to ferment and disturb the whole spiritual being and to endanger its complete souring and spoiling,—but purging it out by constantly resisting it, cleansing our thoughts, words and deeds with the truth, and cultivating the blessed fruits of the spirit of love, joy and peace, then indeed, as the Apostle affirms, we shall be vessels meet for the Master's use.

5 And not only so, but the Lord can honor such vessels because they honor him: they fairly represent him and his cause. If they are meek and humble-minded, not inclined to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but to think soberly, the Lord can exalt them to positions of trust and honor without injury either to themselves or to the cause; and thus they are more and more sanctified and prepared for every good work.

6 Let as many, therefore, as would be honored and used of the Master now and hereafter—as many as have this hope in them—seek to purify themselves, to purge out the old leaven of sin. In the language of another forceful illustration, let

us endeavor to war a good warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil. And be assured that in these duties we have the work of a lifetime; and even at its close we will still find the necessity for the robe of Christ's righteousness to cover our remaining deformities of character.

While the purging here spoken of has reference to the general cleansing from all sin and uncleanness, the Apostle had special reference on that occasion to purging from a disposition to hearken to false doctrines of those who would subvert the faith of the Church. His counsel is to avoid foolish questions and strife about words to no profit, to shun profane and vain babblings which increase only unto more ungodliness, which savor more of bombast and self-exaltation than of truth and godliness, and, on the contrary, to study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.

There is much significance in that word **"study"**; and only the studious find the narrow way to the divine approval and acceptance. **Study** to show thyself approved—study the doctrine, study your course of conduct, to keep it in harmony with the doctrine. Study how to promote the peace and prosperity of Zion, and how to shield yourself and others from the missiles of error and from the poison of an evil, worldly spirit. Study to perform the duties of a faithful soldier of the cross—the seemingly insignificant, as well as the bravest and noblest deeds. A soldier has many seemingly trivial duties to perform; and he is as really doing his duty as a soldier when he is polishing his armor, foraging, cooking his meal, cleaning camp, clearing the way or building bridges for the army to pass as when he is fighting the enemy. All such necessary incidental work is entirely compatible with his commission as a soldier, and is not to be considered "entanglements" or hindrances. And these things cannot be avoided or carelessly done without a measure of unfaithfulness.

9 So with the Christian soldier. The routine of life, house-work, daily toil, any and everything incidental to a proper and honest provision of **"things needful"** for ourselves and those dependent on us for support, as well as provision for the prosecution and care of the Lord's work,—all this is a proper part of our engagement as soldiers of the Lord. The Apostle Peter was as truly serving the Lord when catching the fish from whose mouth he got the coin wherewith to pay the Lord's taxes and his own, as when proclaiming, The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. The Apostle Paul was as truly a soldier of the cross and doing his proper work as such when making tents (rather than be chargeable to any) as when he preached Jesus and the resurrection at Mars hill. **Whatever** is done with a view to the glory of our Lord, the Captain of our salvation, or for the benefit of any of our fellow-soldiers, or for our own preparation for this warfare, or in the discharge of obligations which our Captain has recognized and approved,—this is proper work for us as soldiers, and not **entanglement** in the affairs of this life. 10

But the Christian soldier must study to perform even the commonest duties in a manner creditable to his calling. Nor must he permit himself to become entangled with other things which do not relate to his duties as a soldier, and thus to be side-tracked. For instance, if a soldier knowing how to repair watches were to divert his attention from his regular duties, neglect his camp and battle duties, and the commands of his Captain and the proper work of a soldier to acquire some extra compensation by this means, he would be an unfaithful soldier. And so the Christian who turns aside to seek some **personal,** temporal advantage, to the detriment of his duties as a soldier, is likewise, to some extent, an unfaithful soldier and likely to be drawn out of the ranks entirely.

Study to show thyself approved. Study the 11 Word. Study yourself that you may become well acquainted with yourself — that you may know your talents for service and in what directions they lie, and your weak points and how they may be guarded against; that you may know both your abilities and your shortcomings. Then study to avoid error and to shun all foolish questions and profane and vain babblings. Remember that only the foundation of God standeth sure, and that all other foundations are worthless and all other theories must come to naught. But "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 12

And if any man desire honor from God, let him not fail to seek it in God's appointed way—along the pathway of humility; for the Lord giveth his favors to the humble. If you would be a vessel fit for the Master's use and a vessel of honor, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and he will exalt you in due time. Do not be in a hurry about it either; but whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, beginning and ever continuing to cleanse your earthen vessel, that it may be fit for the Master's use.—Z. '94: 137-139.

Bear Ye One Another's Burdens

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."—Gal. 6: 2.

THOSE who look upon the Bible as a collection of moral precepts designed for the regulation of the world in general are very far from the proper estimate of its object and scope; for the Bible is not addressed to the world at all. The whole book, from beginning to end, is the inheritance of the saints—"the sanctified in Christ Jesus." To them all the Apostolic epistles, with a single exception (the epistle of James) are addressed.

The book of Revelation is also similarly addressed. And the Apostle Peter, in referring to the prophecies of the Old Testament, says even of the prophets that "not unto themselves, but unto **us** they did minister." (1 Pet. 1:12. See also Dan. 12:4, 8, 9.) And the Apostle Paul says that "**whatsoever** things were written aforetime were written for **our** learning, that **we** [the sanctified in Christ Jesus] through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Rom. 15:4.) Consequently all that was written aforetime by Moses and the prophets—whether of history or law or prophecy or type or precept—was designed specially for us who are in Christ, for the instruction and comfort of the children of God. And not one iota of it belongs to the unregenerate world. It is a "light which shineth in a dark place" **to Christians**: it is "a lamp to **our** feet, and a light to **our** path." And whatever light the worldly get from it, reaches them indirectly—as reflected from the children of God, who "shine as lights in the world." "**Ye,**" said our Lord, "are the light of the world."—Phil. 2:15; Matt. 5:14.

The plan of God, once discerned, indirectly inculcates every principle of morality and virtue by showing just what God designs to have us to do: by showing, first, how he created us perfect and glorious in his own image and designed us for everlasting life in the enjoyment of his favors; next, that everything in us which is short of that original perfection is due to sin and renders us unworthy of life. Then there is the recognition of sin; and thus the glorious plan for both our legal and our actual deliverance from sin and death is opened up, and the final restitution of all things is assured to the loyal and obedient sons of God; and all the necessary provisions thereto are made manifest.

As the plan is now clearly outlined we see how history and prophecy and type and law all minister to the one grand design of the Book of books, in which the reverent and careful student finds the highest incentives to purity and holiness and the most perfect delineation of that praiseworthy character which he should seek to build up, and in contrast with which the deformity of every evil is manifest.

Among the instructions to the children of God is the one above cited—"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." The law of Christ we have seen to be the law of love: and love says, Bear ye one another's burdens. There are times in the experience of almost every one when the surges of trouble roll high, and the timid, shrinking soul is almost overwhelmed by them. And then how soothing is the sympathy and counsel of a fellow Christian. Worldly-minded friends may sympathize, but their counsel is almost sure to be wrong. Hence the necessity of fellowship with those of like precious faith and of disfellowship with the world.

It is not always necessary to tell one's sorrows and perplexities to another; and to have their sympathy and aid: in most cases they are better untold, except to the Lord. But love's quick discernment is always watchful and ready with the word in season, the cordial friendliness and the helpful hand if need be, to help bear the burden.

There are various kinds of burdens to be borne: there are burdens of bereavement, of financial embarrassment, of business and family cares, of physical and mental suffering, of sudden disasters and great perplexities and anxieties; and there are burdens also of conscious sins. In all these, if we are diligently seeking to fulfil the law of Christ, we may be able to cheer and strengthen fellow-members of the family of Christ with sympathy and counsel, and such aid as may be most needful and timely.

But the Apostle calls particular attention to this last kind of burdens—burdens of sins—and counsels the exercise of this disposition specially in cases of acknowledged sin. We are all to remember our own liability to sin, and therefore to be patient and considerate with others when they are overtaken in a fault. Such patient, forbearing love is one of the most beautiful adornments of the Christian character.

In the family of Christ the various members have their various inherited weaknesses, against which they must wage a lifelong warfare; and these weaknesses are sometimes of such a nature as to interfere to some extent with the rights and comforts of others as well as of themselves. And just here the Apostle offers a word of counsel, saying, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." (Rom. 15:1, 2.) This does not imply that we should not expostulate with such a one and endeavor to help him get rid of his infirmity. This we should do, in the spirit of meekness and kindness, while we patiently endure the trial of our patience, not seeking to please ourselves, but rather to help a weaker brother or sister. "Let every one of us," as the Apostle counsels, "please his neighbor [brother] **for his good, to edification**"—i.e not by simply ignoring his fault as though you considered it all right, but, while kindly urging him to strive against it, still humbly and patiently submitting to the discomfort it brings to you.

If this spirit prevails, the Apostle further shows (1 Cor. 12:24-26), there need be no schism; because all have a mutual care and a mutual love one for another—a care which seeks to encourage and strengthen all that is good and to discourage all that is unbecoming, and a love which throws its mantle over the deformity and endeavors to conceal a fault, rather than to expose the weaker brother to the reproach of others. Thus if one member suffer, all the members suffer with him, in proportion as they are more or less directly associated with him; or, if one member be honored, all the members rejoice with him, and to some degree share the honor: just as when in an earthly family one member rises to honorable distinction all the members partake of the honor and the joy.

For such self-sacrificing love how necessary is the spirit of humility and gentleness and patience and faith. How forceful are the Master's words, "Except ye be converted [from the spirit of the world to the spirit of Christ] and become as little children [in meekness and teachableness], ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. 18:1-6.

And again says the Master, "Whoso shall receive one such little child [one such humble, teachable child of God] in my name receiveth me." Let us, therefore, be in haste to receive and to heartily fellowship every such one.

And here he adds a caution which all would do well to heed, saying, "But whosoever shall insnare one of the least of these who believe in me, it would be better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were sunk in the depth of the sea." With what carefulness, then, should we regard one another.

Dearly beloved, bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ—the law of love. . . . . . Let this blessed law of Christ rule more fully in all who have taken, by consecration, the name of Christ: and let its hallowed influence shine out upon the world, showing them how it brings peace and harmony and happiness—how it makes more tender and devoted wives, more noble and good and kind husbands, more loyal and loving children, more kind and good neighbors, and how it puts oil upon all the troubled waters of present experience and prepares the heart for the enjoyment of all the fruits of righteousness.—Z. '92: 345-347.

Paul at Miletus

Acts 20: 22-35.

Golden Text—"Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the Word of God; and viewing attentively the result of their conduct, imitate their faith."—Heb. 13: 7.—Diaglott.

WE stand in awe before such an example of moral heroism as we find in the Apostle Paul: and the passage chosen for this lesson makes it specially manifest. As we follow him from city to city and mark his faithful labor and care, his patient endurance of persecution, his untiring devotion and zeal for the truth, his patience in instructing and bearing with the weak and ignorant, and all his sufferings for Christ's sake, and then hear him say, "None of these things move me," we feel that we are indeed contemplating a sublime character.

To say that Paul was a remarkable man, a wonderful man, a grand man, gives no adequate conception of his character. See how in every city, bonds and afflictions awaited him: mobs and stripes and imprisonment were his constant expectation. Then read his epistles and mark his fervency of spirit, his deep insight into the things of God, his care for the churches and his deep solicitude for their spiritual welfare, his earnest exhortations and his living example. Read till you are filled with the inspiration of his noble example and behold in him a miracle of divine grace.

No ordinary hopes and ambitions could inspire such a life. His eye of faith was fixed on the things as yet not seen. He was a man of superior advantages and blessings, as well as of peculiar and almost unprecedented trials. "Like one born before the time" (1 Cor. 15:8), he had seen the Lord in his glory and heard his gracious voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." It was unto him as Ananias said,—"The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldst hear the voice of his mouth; for thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard." (Acts 22:14, 15.) In mental vision he had been "caught away to the third heaven" (to the Millennial reign of Christ), and had been granted a glimpse of the glory and blessedness of that reign of righteousness. Again and again he received special, individual encouragement from the Lord. In Corinth the Lord spoke to him by a vision, saying, "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city." (Acts 18:9, 10.) Again, in the midst of fierce persecution "the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." (Acts 23: 11.) And again, when in imminent danger of shipwreck, the angel of the Lord stood by him, saying, "Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Cæsar: and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." (Acts 27: 23, 24.) And the Lord constantly witnessed with him to the truth of the gospel, by miracles and signs which mightily convinced the people.—Acts 19:11, 12; 20:9-12; 28:3-6, 8, 9.

In view of these things, do we not truly say that Paul was a miracle of grace? He himself said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13); and that it was the power of Christ that rested on him. (2 Cor. 12:9, 10.) The grace given was indeed sufficient for the heavy labors and incessant toil of this beloved witness of the Lord unto us Gentiles. And as we look upon his shining course we see Christ in him; and reason says, If one who thus saw the Lord and heard his gracious voice, and who lived in such close and constant fellowship with him, was so inspired with hope and joy, and so nerved to cheerful endurance of hardship, pain and loss of every earthly treasure, the reward itself must indeed be glorious.

Beloved, let us mark the noble examples of the Lord and of Paul, and let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, as did Paul, for all needed strength and consolation.

With these thoughts, returning to the lesson, we see, in the parting of the beloved Apostle with the elders of the church at Ephesus, who had come to bid him farewell before he set sail for Jerusalem, and to receive his parting counsel, another reminder of his faithfulness and a worthy example for our imitation.

Verses 25-27. He said to them, "I know that ye shall see my face no more. Wherefore, I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men [He was bearing in mind his personal responsibility as a steward of the Lord and the solemn significance of it as indicated by the Prophet Ezekiel—33:7-9]; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." On the part of Paul there was no compromise of the truth, no mixing of it with human philosophies to make it more palatable to either Jews or Gentiles, or to avoid thus any measure of the otherwise inevitable persecution. The Christian teacher who can truly bear such testimony under such circumstances is indeed a soldier of the cross.

Verses 28-31. Note his fatherly counsel to these elders to continue to supplement the Apostle's labors with their own; and with the same zeal and carefulness in which he had set them an example. Note also his faithful warning against false teachers, who would surely develop in their midst; against wolves in sheep's clothing, who would not spare the flock while selfishly seeking their own temporal advantage. The Apostle did not counsel the handling of these wolves very gently, as some teachers of today advise. He did not say, you must call them all brethren, and tell them they are probably as near the truth as you are, and that you have a broad charity for all sorts of vain philosophies, etc., etc. No, Paul was not the man for such compromises.—Rom. 16:17, 18; 2 Thes. 3:6, 14; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; 2 Tim. 2:15-19.

Verses 32-35 are touching words—the eloquence of noble deeds, the exhortation of a living example, the benedictions of a loving heart, the incense of a devoted and holy life.

Verses 36-38. Since the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, we cannot doubt that all their hearts were refreshed and comforted with a blessed sense of divine grace for this and every time of need, though their tears flowed freely at the thought of parting, to meet no more until the blessed day of final recompense.

The golden text is well chosen, though the common translation gives a significance at variance with the teachings of the Lord and the apostles. (See Matt. 20:25-28; 2 Cor. 1:24; 1 Pet. 5:1-3.) The Lord does not raise up **rulers** from among our brethren in the body of Christ; but he does raise up faithful **leaders**, to whom earnest heed should be given, and whose faith and example should be imitated.—Z. '93:221-223.

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If the present movement among the Lord's people is under the Lord's supervision at all, the Lord is responsible, and can be trusted to accomplish His own ends in His own best way without the violation of either the letter or spirit of His commands.—Z. '13:374.

◇

As children of God we have been called to a position of great favor and advantage. Our Heavenly Father has revealed to us his plans and purposes and has condescended to take us into his fellowship and active co-operation; and so grand and glorious and extensive is the outlook of the future that we are able to view the things of the present life in a vastly different light from that in which the world views them.—Z. '11:56.

◇

History is making at such break-neck speed that men of the world go breathless in pursuit. They behold the current events, but understand not why they are so. Christians, watching the transpiring of these events, by the Lord's grace understand them and rejoice to see their hopes about to be realized. The truths of the present day, earthly and spiritual, stimulate the child of God to greater activity in the Master's service—Z. '18:3.

◇

A little longer and the plan of God will be complete, and we shall know as we are known. But, meantime, the "watchers" will take comfort from the evidence we have, that all these and other matters of prophecy are reaching fulfilment, and that on time.—Z. '06:292.

◇

The lesson of faith, dear brother, is an important one for all to learn and, if we are slow in learning it, we will probably be kept under the necessary experiences that much the longer — because the Father loveth us and seeketh in us this good quality. Faith will not look at any of the divine arrangements as unkind or cold, but will see in them all, and in all of life's experiences, the very blessing most needed, and can sing,

> "Content, whatever lot I see,
> Since 'tis my God that leadeth me."
> —Z. '99:206.

◇

To the eye of faith, all things are possible; to the eye of unbelief, all things, in the way of the conquest of the flesh, are impossible. Let us go up and possess the Land! Let us be of good courage and fight the good fight! God will be with us and give us the victory, with the proper exercise of faith!—Z. '13:282.

◇

The light of Present Truth does not contradict the light of past Truth, but confirms it and further clarifies our vision and increases our hope and our joy.—Z. '10:291.

Published by the Standfast Bible Students. Address all communications: Standfast Bible Students, Scott Building, 2659 Douglas Street, Victoria, B. C.

Old Corn Gems

No. 126

"And they did eat of the OLD CORN of the land on the morrow after the Passover . . . and the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the OLD CORN of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." Joshua 5:11-12.

A SAFE RULE

"WHERE A BROTHER GIVES AN INTERPRETATION OF A SCRIPTURE WHICH DIFFERS FROM THAT GIVEN BY BROTHER RUSSELL AND BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION SEEMS REASONABLE AND IN HARMONY WITH THE PLAN OF GOD. THEN WE BELIEVE IT A SAFE RULE TO FOLLOW BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION, FOR THE REASON THAT HE IS THE SERVANT OF THE CHURCH, SO CONSTITUTED BY THE LORD FOR THE LAODICEAN PERIOD; AND THEREFORE WE SHOULD EXPECT THE LORD TO TEACH US THROUGH HIM. WHERE THERE ARISES A DOUBT IN THE MIND AS TO WHICH INTERPRETATION IS CORRECT, THEN IT IS ALWAYS SAFER TO RESOLVE THAT DOUBT IN FAVOR OF BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION. WE BELIEVE SUCH TO BE IN HARMONY WITH THE LORD'S WILL."—Z. '18: 51.

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The Lord Betrayed

John 18:1-14.

"He is despised and rejected of men."—Isa. 53: 3.

1 AFTER the Last Supper, and after his discourse to the disciples respecting the Vine and the branches, came our Lord's beautiful prayer recorded in John's 17th chapter. Then, probably about midnight, Jesus, with the eleven, passed outside the gate of Jerusalem, crossed the little brook called Cedron, and on the farther hill above it entered the olive orchard known as the Garden of Gethsemane: perhaps it was a public garden, or possibly the property of some one friendly to our Lord. What purports to be its site is now maintained as a garden, and has been for centuries. It is in charge of monks who take pleasure in receiving visitors to view it. There are about six or eight very large and evidently very old olive trees in this garden at the present—they give evidence of being at least one thousand years old, but possibly are much older.

2 While talking with his disciples and praying for them our Lord seemingly was full of good courage: while exhorting them that their hearts be not troubled evidently his own heart was not cast down. But as the little company wended its way to Gethsemane we may well suppose that a great weight fell upon our dear Redeemer's sensibilities. We can imagine him saying, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." (Matt. 26:38.) The present visit to Gethsemane, therefore, was evidently very different from previous visits. Some appreciation of the momentous occasion was no doubt inspired in the hearts of the Apostles by the Master's dejection, and yet they probably but slightly comprehended what was about to come to pass.

3 Arrived at the Garden, we glean from other Evangelists that our Lord left eight of the Apostles near the gate, taking Peter, James and John, his closest companions, a little farther with him, and cautioning them all to watch and pray, because it was an hour of special trial. Going a little farther by himself, he communed with the Father in secret. His feelings were not and could not be shared even by his beloved disciples; they could not appreciate the trial through which he was passing; they had not yet been begotten of the spirit. Thus in his most trying hour Jesus was alone—"Of the people there was none with me."—Isa. 63:3.

4 It is difficult for the majority, even of Christian people, to appreciate the true character of our dear Lord's trial, which in this instance so wrought upon his nervous system as to produce a bloody sweat. Many compare our Lord's course with that of some of his martyr followers who have gone forth into death with remarkable courage, and in contrasting matters they are inclined to wonder why our Lord, who was perfect, should have endured so much more a passion of suffering than his imperfect followers. To grasp the true situation it is necessary that several things be borne in mind:—

5 (1) For our Lord, who had a perfect right to life, to lay it down in death, was a very different matter from the laying down of a forfeited and impaired life on the part of those who could not hope to keep it long anyway. (2) Our race, already nine-tenths dead, has but a feeble appreciation of the great value of life—all of its experience having been in connection with dying, it has come to regard death with equanimity. But not so our Lord, the "prince of life," who had been with the Father from the beginning, and by whom all things were made—he realized life as a very precious boon, privilege, enjoyment. To him, therefore, death must have been much more terrible than to us who are already nine-tenths dead, and correspondingly blunted in all of our sensibilities. True he had the Father's assurance that if faithful unto death he should have a resurrection, and unquestionably he believed the Father's promise—all of his course in life gives abundant evidence of his implicit faith in the Father. And yet in his case this must have been a crucial trial to faith, much more so than with us. As we have only a shred of a forfeited life to lay down, so we have on the other hand, not only the Father's promise of a future life through Christ, but we have the example of the Father's power in the resurrection of our dear Redeemer: but our Lord Jesus had no such evidence of the divine power; he himself, according to the divine promise, was to be the "first-born from the dead," a first-fruit unto God of his creatures.—Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 15:20.

6 But all this had already been counted, weighed and accepted from the very beginning of his ministry. He had already informed the disciples that it was necessary that he should lay down his life for the sheep, and that he was about to do so. (John 10:15.) We are not to assume, therefore, when our dear Redeemer prayed, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me," that he meant if it were possible he might escape dying. He well knew, and had already explained to the Apostles, that the drawing of the world could not take place except he were lifted up as the sin-offering—that it was absolutely necessary that he should die for our sins and enter into his glory.—John 3:14; 12:32.

7 The cup which he prayed might pass from him, if possible, we must therefore suppose to have been the shame and ignominy of arrest as a lawbreaker, a public trial and conviction, and subsequent crucifixion as a malefactor. It was one thing to die for our sins, as men generally die, without special shame or contumely; it was another thing that he should die with such extreme shame, dishonor and contempt. Quite probably in the Father's wisdom this last feature was kept more or less hidden from our dear Redeemer until just about the time of its accomplishment. And apparently

our Lord Jesus did not see any absolute necessity for his suffering more than the sinner suffered, in order to pay man's ransom price. Hence his prayer for a time was, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." The Apostle also notes this distinction, saying, he "became obedient unto death," and then adds "even the death of the cross."—Phil. 2:8.

Par/8 The death of the cross, with its attendant dishonor, reproach, etc., so far as we may be able to judge, was not necessary as our ransom price, because the penalty did not read, In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die with public reprobation and dishonor by crucifixion. Since the penalty was death (Gen. 2:17), we may suppose that our Lord's death by any means would have fully paid man's ransom price. However, the additional features were deemed necessary by the Father, and the "cup" did not pass. The Father required this extreme of obedience as a test, a proof not only to himself but before all his intelligent creatures of the absolute loyalty of heart of his "well beloved Son," upon whom he designed shortly thereafter to confer the great blessing and high exaltation of his own divine nature and joint-heirship in his Kingdom. And the loyalty of our dear Redeemer was fully attested, as the Apostle declares; he "despised the shame," that is to say, the shame was as nothing in his sight in comparison with the accomplishment of the Father's purposes, the pleasing of the Father. (Heb. 12:2.) So long as he thought there was a possibility of the elimination of the shame feature, he was nervously anxious to have it so, if possible; but as soon as he realized that this was not the Father's will his heart instantly responded, "Not my will but thine be done." Decision respecting the Father's will immediately brought strength; he was now prepared for any experience, "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might."

9 Meanwhile Judas, who some days before had engaged with the high-priest to betray Jesus, and who left the upper room immediately after the Supper to carry out his nefarious plan, had received of the chief priests and Pharisees a band of men, with a person in charge as an officer, whose mission it was to arrest Jesus in the night and to secure his execution before the Passover. We must wholly disagree with the common thought that this "band" consisted of an army of three to six hundred Roman soldiers. They certainly acted very differently from soldiers ordinarily under such circumstances. Besides, the record by all of the Evangelists is that this band was sent, not by Pilate nor by Herod, the Roman representatives, but by the chief priests and Pharisees, who we know had no command whatever of the Roman garrison. To our understanding this band which apprehended Jesus was very similar to the one mentioned in John 7:32-46.

10 It would appear that the Jewish Sanhedrin exercised a certain amount of authority in respect to religious matters, and were permitted to make arrests, but not to execute criminals without the consent of the Roman governor. We remember that the apostles were arrested on several occasions by such officers of the Jews.—See Acts 5:17, 18, 22, 25-40.

Both Matthew and Mark speak of this aggregation, under officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, as a "multitude," and our Lord's words indicate that they were armed with sticks and swords such as were common to the people in general, and he does not mention spears, which would probably have been a part of the armament of a band of Roman soldiers. This thought is further emphasized by the fact that it was the high priest's servant who evidently made the first assault upon Jesus, and received a blow from Peter's sword. If Roman soldiers had the matter in charge the high priest's servant no doubt would have been less officious.

12 It is presumed, and apparently on good grounds, that this company seeking Jesus, under the guidance of Judas, went first to the upper room which our Lord and the Apostles had left probably less than an hour before. Finding that Jesus and the eleven were gone, Judas knew that he would be most likely to find them in the Garden of Gethsemane, for "Jesus ofttimes resorted thither with his disciples." John's account omits the particulars of the betrayal given by the other Evangelists: possibly the loving disciple felt so much ashamed of the facts that he preferred not to mention them. Certainly very few acts of treachery ever paralleled this one, and all mankind, even in their perverted condition of mind, seem to realize that the position of traitor is amongst the most despicable on the calendar, and such treachery as that of Judas, against such kindness and love and goodness as that of his Master, we may be thankful is not so very common. And yet there are correspondencies in the experiences of the Lord's people, "in perils amongst false brethren." It behooves us each to look to it that we permit nothing akin to the spirit of Judas to rankle in our hearts. Our Lord puts the "members of his body" in such matters on a plane with himself, and assures us that whoever shall injure one of the least of these his brethren, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.—Matt. 18:6.

13 Of course there will always be a motive, good or bad, back of every deed done. To find strong motives is not to find valid excuses for treacheries. So far as our experience and judgment go, the lesson is that such treachery from "false brethren" usually has its spring in covetousness, lust for influence, power or position, and the desire to glorify such unholy ambitions cannot fail to corrupt any heart which entertains them. As one has said:—

> "Sow a thought, you reap an act;
> Sow an act, you reap a habit;
> Sow a habit, you reap a character;
> Sow a character, you reap a destiny."

14 Judas had been doing some of this sowing of evil thoughts for a considerable time before his thoughts took outward shape in evil acts. He was covetous of wealth and of influence; he became the treasurer of the little group of disciples, and the intimation of the Scriptures is that he purloined to his own private uses a portion of the contributions. As usual, his love for money increased the more he exercised it, until he was willing to betray

his Master for thirty pieces of silver—equivalent to about twenty dollars of our money, though representing in value of labor a much larger sum. It would seem, too, that Judas was looking forward to the promised Kingdom, and probably anticipated a high position as royal treasurer of that Kingdom.

15 It is quite possible, indeed probable, we think, that Judas was seriously disappointed in respect to the result of his betrayal. Apparently he expected that our Lord would deliver himself by miraculous power from the hands of his enemies. This is the most charitable view we would know how to take of his treacherous conduct: it relieves the blackness of the act only a very little, however, for he who would be willing to despitefully use his best friend, even temporarily, for a money consideration, gives evidence of having prostituted every good and noble sentiment of his being to his love of money. Indeed, the love of honor may have had considerable to do with the matter, for he may have hoped by bringing about this crisis that our Lord would be compelled to set up the long-promised Kingdom, or else to own that all his claims and promises were fraudulent.

Sun morn 16 Judas surely did succeed in expediting matters, and in bringing about the installation of the embryo Kingdom of God; but not in the manner he expected, nor in any degree to his own honor or advantage. Thus it must be with those who receive the truth and who profess discipleship under it—not in the love of the truth, but in the love of honors hoped for, either present or future. Let us all who have named the name of Christ take heed and watch and pray lest there should be in any of us any of the elements of this vile character. And let us remember that there are various secret ways, as well as the more outward ones, in which we may betray the Lord and the "brethren."

The evangelist declares that Jesus knew in advance all things that would come upon him. We are elsewhere told that while he prayed, "There appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." (Luke 22:43.) This ministry may have consisted in informing him of the Father's will in respect to what things he should suffer, and how they were to be expected, and this knowledge that the matter was settled, and the assurance that the Father would over-rule it all, strengthened his heart and gave him the great calmness which we observe in all his subsequent course.

The "band" sent to apprehend him evidently expected that they might be obliged to seek for him in the shadows of the trees, etc., and hence they were provided with torches and lanterns. Unquestionably they were greatly surprised that our Lord, instead of fleeing from them, advanced to them, and inquired whom they sought. Quite possibly some of those in the "band" had previous knowledge of the Lord—of his miracles, power over devils, etc., and this may have been the reason for their manifestation of weakness in retreat and falling to the ground. Or it is possible that our Lord exercised over them a superior mental power which produced this effect, for the purpose of showing that he had full power to resist them if he had chosen to use it.

The same lesson, we believe, is taught by Peter's use of the sword upon the high priest's servant. We are to remember that one of the Evangelists records that our Lord instructed the apostles to take swords with them, and that when two were found he said, "It is enough." (Luke 22:36, 38.) Our Lord had no thought of having his disciples war a carnal warfare on his behalf, as he subsequently stated, "If my kingdom were of this world then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." (John 18:36.) The two swords were sufficient to show that our Lord's apprehension was not because there were no means of defence, nor because of cowardice on the part of his disciples, but merely because of his submission—knowing that his hour was come, and that thus it behooved him to suffer for our sins and to enter into his glory.—Luke 24:46.

After this one manifestation of power, as indicating his full ability to cope with that multitude, and indeed his power to have more than twelve legions of angels to defend him, had he so desired (Matt. 26:53), we find our Lord fully submitting himself to capture, merely making condition that the disciples might go their way. How grand the character which at such a moment, under such trying conditions, could so fully forget self and feel interested merely in the welfare of others! How like what we should expect of Him!

"That the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me I have lost none." We understand the writer to mean that here again in the Master's course we find an exemplification of his care for his disciples, as enunciated in his prayer just before leaving the upper room. While the thought of his prayer was chiefly in respect to their spiritual interests, that none of them should be lost, we do well to notice this as a corroborative illustration of our Lord's care of the physical interests of all who become his disciples. Not a hair of their heads shall fall; nothing shall be permitted to injure them—every event and affair of life will be overruled for their highest good.—Matt. 6:32, 33.

It was probably when Jesus began to be bound that Peter drew his sword in his defence; perhaps he remembered the Lord's words of a few hours previous, to the effect that his followers would all forsake him, and his own promise, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." (Mark 14:29.) Noble, zealous Peter! We love him for his noble expression of sentiment, and for his heroic defence of the Master with the sword against superior numbers. It is the custom of many to decry Peter's action, as another of his rash errors. We are to remember, however, that the Apostles had not yet received the holy Spirit and therefore could not clearly appreciate the fact that the Kingdom to which they were called is a spiritual Kingdom. Besides, as we have seen, he was merely following the Lord's counsel in taking the sword with him, and evidently also carrying out the divine purpose in using it. We see nothing to blame, everything to commend. It was a sign of larger import than Peter and the others there realized.

But having permitted the matter to go thus far, our Lord restrained Peter, saying, "Suffer yet thus far. Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" And so saying he touched his wounded enemy and healed him. The disciples were to see, understand, be fully assured, that our Lord, in delivering himself to his enemies, did it voluntarily, and hence the proceedings were so pantomimed as to enforce this lesson.

How the grace of humility shines out in all the little affairs of our dear Redeemer's ministry; even at this moment of his surrender to his enemies he does not boast that his course is a voluntary one, nor seek praise as a martyr! He declares the simple truth, that the Father required this of him as an evidence of his personal loyalty to him. He confesses himself a servant of God, a son who learned obedience by the things which he suffered. "The cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Indeed, this was the strength of his victory—his will was fully submitted to the Father's will, and his faith grasped the fact that the Father permitted no unnecessary evils to come upon him, but only such as he could and would overrule for good.

There is a valuable lesson here for all who are seeking to walk in the footsteps of the great High Priest. We also are to remember that so long as we abide in Christ, and seek to walk in his footsteps, all the trying experiences of life are carefully measured for us by the Lord—that he does not pour into our cup of sorrow and trial any bitter experiences that are not needful to us, and that will not subsequently work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. (2 Cor. 4:17.) With these assurances, and with the evidences of the Father's faithfulness to our glorified Master and Forerunner, we indeed may have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to the hope set before us in the Gospel.—Heb. 6:18-20.

The healing of the smitten ear, our Lord's last miracle, was most beautifully illustrative of his character and teachings. It exemplified his words, "Love your enemies, do good to them that persecute you." It showed that he was filled with the divine love which his teachings inculcated, and that he had no bitterness toward those who despitefully used and persecuted him.

The binding of our Lord seems to have been entirely unnecessary, except as the "band" might desire to make an exhibition of their prowess to those who had sent them. Our Lord seems to have remonstrated in respect to this, as per the account given in Mark 14:48, 49: "Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and with staves, to take me? I was daily with you in the Temple, teaching, and ye took me not. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." It was then that the eleven forsook him and fled. Judas continuing with the band went to the house of Annas the priest, who doubtless had bargained with Judas, and no doubt it was at this time that the thirty pieces of silver were paid over, Judas having now shown a fulfilment of the contract. Poor wretched man! The Son of man indeed went to death, as it had been written of him, but this made none the less horrible the treachery, the covetousness and murderous spirit that delivered him up to his enemies. So with the members of the body of Christ: it must needs be that offences come—it is a part of the divine plan that the body of Christ should fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of the Head (Col. 1:24)—but this makes none the less sinful the conduct of those who have to do with such betrayals—especially if they be "false brethren" who have enjoyed some knowledge of the truth. In every instance, however, it will be observed that although the trials worked out blessing for the Lord and will do so also for all the faithful who suffer with him, the rewards of unrighteousness sought by those who take Judas' course never yield them the honors and blessings they coveted, and for which they sold themselves to work evil.—Z. '99:115-119. Sunday 12 April

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"He Was Numbered With the Transgressors"

John 19:17-30.

"The Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." —Gal. 2:20.

CRUCIFIXION was the horrible method of execution in olden times for the vilest of criminals—its severity being intended to intimidate and deter evil-doers, rather than as a gratification of cruel sentiments. Farrar says of it:—

"Death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of the horrible and ghastly—dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of untended wounds—all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but all stopping just short of the point which would give to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. Such was the death to which Christ was doomed."

The envious and murderous chief priests and doctors of Judaism desired just such a public denunciation of the great Teacher who so fearlessly had exposed their hypocrisies and inconsistencies, and who was fast making an impression upon the common people. For them to have stoned him to death as a blasphemer they probably feared would leave him a martyr in the eyes of many, while to have him publicly executed as a criminal, sentenced by the Sanhedrin and executed by the highest civil power in the world, would, they hoped, brand Jesus, his teachings and his followers, forever with infamy. We may imagine, therefore, how their evil hearts exulted, when finally they had coerced Pilate into signing the warrant for the execution of Jesus.

According to Mark's account (15:25) the death-warrant was signed by Pilate about nine o'clock in the morning—the trial of Jesus, and Pilate's various attempts to secure his release from his enemies, having occupied three hours. At once they started, the two robbers bearing their crosses and Jesus bearing his cross, taking the place of Barrabas, who was to have been executed, but who was released. It was the custom in olden times to compel the convicts to bear the instruments of their own torture. Nor were the crosses so large and heavy as they are generally illustrated in modern paintings. On the contrary, the evidence is that the feet of the crucified were usually only twelve to eighteen inches from the ground. Although small, these crosses constituted a good burden for a reasonably strong man; but our Lord, after passing through his Gethsemane experiences and the night of buffeting and scourging, and his further scourging by Pilate's orders, was sick, exhausted, weak, sore. Apparently even the hardened soldiers took pity upon him, and meeting Simon the Cyrenian on the way, they compelled him to relieve Jesus.

We know nothing respecting Simon, except that Mark relates that he was the father of Alexander and Rufus, which gives the suggestion that these, his two sons, may subsequently have become the followers of Jesus and well known amongst the disciples. In any event Simon himself enjoyed a great privilege which thousands since have almost envied. How the apostles, Peter, James and John and others, must have regretted the fearfulness of heart which kept them all at a distance, and hindered them from proffering their aid to the Master in his trying hour! John, we know, was not far off; probably the others were near also; but what an opportunity they missed!

And very similar opportunities are still with us all. As everyone who follows the Master's footsteps must needs have some Gethsemane experiences, so also each must have a taste at least of all the Master's experiences. Let us not forget, then, to look about us for opportunities for serving the "brethren," the "little ones." Let each be careful not to add to the reproaches that must fall upon all the followers of the Lamb, but on the contrary to offer words of sympathy, and to help bear each other's crosses, difficulties and trials by the way. Thus can we best show to our Lord how we would have appreciated the opportunity of helping him bear his cross on the way to Calvary.

The place of crucifixion was called Golgotha, the Hebrew word signifying a skull, the Latin name for a skull being Calvary. This name was given to the locality probably because the general contour of the hill, which was just outside of Jerusalem, closely resembles a skull when viewed at a distance. It was on the way to this place, Golgotha, Calvary, that some of the charitable women of Jerusalem, according to their general custom, offered the condemned ones sour wine mixed with bitter myrrh—a draught which had a tendency to stupefy the nerves, thus rendering the execution the less agonizing. The two robbers quite probably drank of the potion, but Mark (15:23) declares that our Lord refused it—having learned that his experiences were the Father's will, he would do nothing whatever to hinder himself from receiving them to the full.

Probably Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, the mother of James and John, and Salome, the wife of Cleophas (Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:40) and others of the friends of Jesus, by this time gained courage and mingled with the women who offered the wine and myrrh, so that Luke says, "There followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."—Luke 23:27, 28.

Thus, and with other words recorded, our Lord foreshadowed the great time of trouble coming upon the Jewish nation. By the expression, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" he implies that, although the nation of Israel had been given up only five days previously, when he exclaimed, "Your house is left unto you desolate," if their rulers could sanction such injustice and lawlessness while their greenness, freshness and religious vitality remained, what might be expected in the future, after the religious vitality had dried out and the nation as a whole had become ready for the great "burning" of their day of trouble, which was designed to, and had been prophesied should, utterly consume their polity. And how literally our Lord's prophecy was fulfilled: Josephus, without a thought of corroborating this testimony, tells us with explicitness of detail of the terrible sufferings which came upon the women and children during the great time of trouble which ended with the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70.

When we reflect upon the prophecy, "He was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12), and then consider the terrible persistency with which the leading Jews pursued the dear Redeemer to secure his execution, it furnishes us fresh evidence of divine foreknowledge which, without interfering with the free moral agency of any man, is nevertheless working all things according to the counsel of God's will. We see afresh how God causes the wrath of man to praise him, and to testify to his wisdom and foreknowledge.

It was customary to have four soldiers attend each prisoner to execution; foremost went one who bore a white board on which was written the crime for which the prisoner was to be executed, and which was fastened above his head on the cross; then followed three soldiers with the hammer and nails, etc., and these all were under the command of a captain or centurion. The board placed above Jesus, on the cross, declared him to be the King of the Jews, and was written in three languages—in Hebrew, the language of the country, in Greek, because it was the language of the visitors and of the educated from all quarters, and in Latin, because it was the language of the empire and of the soldiers. There is a slight difference in the statements of the different Evangelists respecting the words used on this tablet, which may be accounted for by supposing that the words differed slightly in the different languages, and that the Evangelists quoted from the different originals.

Little did Pilate comprehend the great truth which he set before the world in the words, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Few yet realize the truth of this statement that Jesus is a King; comparatively few have yet rendered him allegiance, bowing the knee of their hearts in sincerity and truth: and yet so surely as the Lord has spoken it, the time is coming when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess him Lord, Master, King, to the glory of God the Father. . . .

The Jewish Doctors of Divinity were willing enough to have Jesus condemned as the King of the Jews, but were quite unwilling to have this sentence publicly recorded, and thus to imply that they had so feared his claim and influence as to seek his death. Pilate's refusal to amend the charge was a just one; if there was no merit in the claim, why should they have feared him, and why should he have been crucified? If there was enough merit in the claim to lead to his crucifixion, the matter should be plainly stated.

The division of the spoil was customary at every crucifixion, and gave evidence of the indifference and hard-heartedness of the soldiers in the presence of suffering. The raiment divided consisted of headdress, outer robe, girdle and sandals; the garment here called a "coat" and "vesture" was an undergarment which reached from the neck to the feet. It was evidently of fine quality and texture, as indicated by the fact that it was woven throughout, seamless. The casting of lots for this robe marked the fulfilment of a prophecy to which John calls attention. (Psa. 22:18.) The seamless robe appears to symbolize the righteousness of Christ, which can be appropriated only as a whole; it is of one piece, and may not be marred. Whoever may get it, gets a most valuable robe, and whoever may fail to get it, fails to obtain the righteousness which is of God in Christ. But not by lot or accident or chance does this robe come to the Lord's people. As the scriptures clearly point out, it is obtained only through the exercise of faith, and held only by the obedience of faith. We might perhaps consider it a symbol of the wedding-garment which falls to the lot of one class only, a little flock, who through faith and perseverance shall inherit the Kingdom as members of the body of Christ, covered by his seamless and spotless robe of righteousness.

The Apostle John had grown bolder as the day advanced, and while our Lord was crucified he drew near and was within speaking distance—quite possibly encouraged by seeing "the wife of Cleophas," who is supposed to have been a relative. It was a sorrowful gathering for these whose hearts went out with sympathy for the Master whom they loved but were powerless to comfort or relieve. They were weeping and sorrowing while others jeered and taunted, saying, "If thou be Messiah, come down from the cross"—thinking doubtless that our Lord's crucifixion by his enemies was the best possible proof that his claim to Messiahship was a fraudulent one,—proving that he was an imposter. . . .

But as the true disciples had a heart-union with the Lord, which outward circumstances and misfortunes could not break, a love which adversity could not chill, so with all his "brethren," those who are in heart-harmony, in oneness of spirit, will be found faithful under the most trying circumstances and adversities, because they have one spirit, a spirit of love for the brethren.

How it gives us an insight into our Lord's sympathetic nature, to find him thinking in the interest of others at the very time when he himself is overwhelmed in trouble! His own agony did not hinder him from thinking of his mother, and making provision for her comfort, commending her to the care of the loving disciple John. We thus see exemplified in the Master the teaching of the Scriptures that each should seek to make provision for his own dependent ones and, as the Apostle says, "If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (1 Tim. 5:8.) "The faith" includes thoughts of love, sympathy, interest and care for others, especially for them of the household of faith. We note the choice of John: it was doubtless because, first of all, of his loving tender disposition; secondly, his zeal for the Lord and the truth, and thirdly, his courage in pressing near to be with his dying Master in his closing hours, at the risk of his own life. Let us note these characteristics, as being those which the Lord approves, that noting them we may cultivate them in ourselves, and be granted special opportunities for service by this same Master.

It was about the close of our Lord's agony that he said, "I thirst," and this gave opportunity for the fulfilment of the prophecy which declared, "They gave me vinegar to drink." (Psa. 69:21.) This was not the ordinary vinegar, but more properly sour wine, the common, cheap drink of the soldiers. The sponge filled with the sour wine, and reached up to our Lord's mouth on a hyssop branch, served to moisten his lips and tongue, and was evidently intended as an act of kindness, mercy.

The different accounts give altogether what are known as "The seven words on the cross."

The first word from the cross: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34.) While these words undoubtedly represent truly our Lord's sentiments as respected his enemies, nevertheless it is proper here to remark that the oldest Greek MSS. do not contain these words.

The second word from the cross: Our Lord's message to the robber, "Verily I say to thee today, —Thou shalt be with me in Paradise."—Luke 23:43.

The third word from the cross: "Woman, behold thy son! . . . Behold thy mother!"

The fourth word from the cross: "My God! my God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34.) Of this expression a noted theologian has said, "In the entire Bible there is no other sentence so difficult to explain." Yet the meaning of this, and the reason for it, are very easily seen when once we have the correct view of the ransom. From this standpoint we see that the Logos became a man. "was made flesh," in order that he by the grace of God might taste death for every man. (Heb. 2:9.) We see also that the death penalty upon father Adam was the one which Jesus must experience in order to the satisfaction of Justice and the release of Adam and those who came under condemnation in and through Adam. As the penalty against Adam was death in the fullest and most complete sense, so Christ died for our sins, suffering the Just for the unjust, that he might release us from the death penalty and make possible a resurrection of the dead. As the penalty against Adam included his isolation from the Father as a condemned rebel, so it was necessary that our Lord Jesus, in taking Adam's place, should experience (if only for a short time) the full meaning of a sinner's separation from God.

Very mercifully, the Father did not permit this feature of Adam's penalty to rest upon our Redeemer throughout the entire period of his sacrificial ministry, but only at its very close. It was the fact of his communion with the Father that permitted Jesus to pass through all the trying experiences of that day and the preceding night with such great courage, but now, when the Father's sustaining grace and fellowship and communion of spirit with him were withdrawn, and our Redeemer, with all his fine sensibilities, was utterly bereft of solace from his dearest friend, it led his breaking heart to cry out these words of anguish. Evidently it had been hidden from him up to this time that he must suffer this phase of the punishment of Adam's transgression.

The fifth word from the cross: "I thirst," we have already considered.

The sixth word from the cross: "It is finished," suggests to us that our Lord's earthly mission had been accomplished. He came to die, to redeem the death-condemned race of Adam, to purchase it with his own precious blood, his life. He had consecrated himself to this work in harmony with the Father's plan, and with his dying breath, expiring, he could say that he had finished the work which the Father had given him to do. How it rejoices us to know that our dear Redeemer did complete the work, that he did not resent the taunts of those who said, "If thou be Messiah, come down from the cross"; "Save thyself!" We rejoice to think that since the great sacrifice has been finished (and especially in view of the fact that the Heavenly Father subsequently declared that it was finished acceptably), we may realize that there is now, therefore, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.—Rom. 8:1. . . .

The seventh word from the cross: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." (Luke 23:46.) These our Lord's last words were a quotation from the Scriptures. (Psa. 31:5.) In other words, it had already been declared of him that thus he would commend himself to the Father's grace and truth. Our Lord was finishing laying down his human life a ransom for many sinners, but the Father had promised him a new life on a higher plane, as a reward for his faith, obedience and sacrifice. This new life, or life as a "new creature" was begun at the time of our Lord's baptism when he received the holy Spirit; this new life was continuing and growing during the years of his ministry while he was daily dying according to the flesh; the outward man was perishing, but the inward new creature was being renewed day by day. Now the outward man was about to cease entirely—fully surrendered, the sacrifice finished.

Our Lord's interest in and hope for a future life looked forward, in harmony with the Father's promise, to the new or resurrection life; the new mind or spirit begun at the moment of his baptism and consecration, having the divine promise of being perfected in a resurrection, in a spirit-body suitable for and in harmony with the new mind, the new will. But this change could not take place instantly: the divine law had arranged that not until the third day could he be quickened as the new creature of spiritual body. He must take this by faith; no one had ever passed this way before: yet with full confidence our dear Redeemer looked up to the Father, and full of faith declared that he committed all of life and all of these blessed hopes for the future to the Father's love and to the Father's power,—to be provided in harmony with the Father's plan and Word.—Z. '99:125-128.

"Humble Yourselves, Therefore"

John 13:1-15.

Golden Text:—"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you."—John 13: 34.

OUR Lord's ministry was about ended. He met with his twelve chosen disciples to celebrate the Passover supper, declaring, "I have greatly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." (Luke 22:15.) The passover lamb which they were to eat typified our Lord himself, and the eating of it by his disciples represents how believers feed upon Christ in their hearts, and by faith appropriate to themselves the blessings secured to them through his death, "For even Christ our Passover [Lamb] is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast." (1 Cor. 5:7, 8.) But, inasmuch as Jesus was the antitypical Lamb, it was appropriate that the type should be discontinued; and hence it was that our Lord, following this last typical Supper, instituted the Memorial Supper of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine as representing the antitype—his broken body and shed blood.

According to the Jewish custom the Passover supper was celebrated by families, and the twelve apostles, specially chosen by our Lord and giving their allegiance to him as their Head, constituted the nucleus of the family of God—whose hearts and hopes and aims were one—for "ye are all called in one hope of your calling." (Eph. 4:4.) Judas was not excluded, although our Lord evidently knew beforehand that it was he who should betray him. This furnishes us the lesson that, as followers of Christ, we should not judge one another's hearts, nor surmise evil. After the evil of the heart has manifested itself in words or deeds is quite time enough to separate ourselves from others who profess the Lord's name and desire to fellowship with us. True, the evil begins in the heart, before the outward act, but we should always hope that the brethren may gain the victory, and should seek to do nothing to stumble any, but everything to help them to overcome the influence of the Adversary and the weaknesses of their own flesh.

John does not give a particular account of the Passover supper, but seems to bring in merely certain valuable features and lessons connected therewith and omitted by the other evangelists. His declaration is that our Lord knew beforehand that he had reached the end of his earthly career and was specially solicitous of improving the closing hours with his particular, chosen friends and companions by inculcating some good lessons. "He loved them to the end"—completely, fully; his own sharp trials, present and approaching, did not distract him nor absorb his attention. He was, as heretofore, still thinking of and endeavoring to bless others. Nor need we suppose that this love for the twelve applied to them exclusively; rather that he viewed the twelve as the representatives of "them also which should believe on him through their word"—as he expressed the matter in his prayer to the Father. With this view in mind we can realize that what our Lord said and did to the apostles was intended to be applicable and instructive to all who have been his since then.—John 17:20.

Self-Seeking a Mistake

From Luke's account it would appear that on this occasion there was a strife amongst the apostles, a contention respecting which of them should be esteemed greatest. (Luke 22:24-31.) This strife may not have been solely one of selfishness, in the evil sense of the word, but, partially prompted by love for the Master, it may have been in respect to their several positions at the table, the coveted position possibly being closeness to our Lord's person. We remember how James and John had made request that they might be on the right and on the left of our Lord in the Kingdom, and we remember that in connection with this narrative it is declared that John was next to our Lord, and leaned upon his bosom.

Quite possibly this dispute respecting greatness arose in part from the fact that they were not in this instance treated as guests, but merely had the upper room put at their disposal; having no host, no provision was thereby made for the usual washing of the feet, and it was neglected. The matter of feet-washing in eastern countries, when sandals were worn, was not merely a compliment, but a necessity, the heat of the climate, the openness of the sandals, and the dust of the roads, making it almost indispensable to comfort that the feet be bathed on arriving at the house after a journey. Apparently this question as to which of the twelve was greatest, and as to which should perform the menial service of feet-washing for the others, had developed the fact that none of them was anxious to take the servant's position.

Apparently our Lord permitted them to thus disagree, without settling their dispute, without appointing any of their number to the menial service. He allowed them to think the matter over—time to relent and reconsider—and they even proceeded to eat the supper, contrary to custom, with unwashed feet.

Then it was that Jesus arose from the supper, laid aside his outer garment, and attaching a towel to the girdle of his under-garments, took a basin and a ewer for the water, and began to pour the water and wash the feet of his disciples. It was not the custom of the East to pour the water into the basin and put the foot into the water, but to pour the water upon the foot being washed; thus each had clean water, and little was wasted—for water is much more scarce and precious there than with us. We are to remember also that in the East at that time tables and chairs such as we use were not in vogue. On the contrary, the tables were low and shaped somewhat like a horseshoe, and those who sat really reclined, lying upon the table, with the left elbow resting upon a pillow or divan, their heads toward the inside of the horseshoe, where there was a space provided for the food, and also a space for a servant to enter and place the food. Thus it will be seen that the feet extended backward, and could quite easily be reached without disturbing those who were eating.

"Ye Are Clean, But Not Entirely"

Our Lord very evidently had already washed the feet of several of the disciples before he came in turn to Peter. Seemingly none of them offered objection, although no doubt the thought of their own contentions upon this subject, and unwillingness to serve one another, brought them blushes of shame and confusion of face. But when it came to Peter's turn he protested. It would never do, he thought, to permit our Lord to perform so menial a service. He asks, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" But our Lord did not stop to reprimand Peter—to give him a thorough "setting down" and scolding, as some of his followers might be inclined to do under such circumstances: he merely insisted on continuing, and treating Peter the same as the others, saying that he would explain the matter later, and that if he washed him not, he could have no part with him.

One cannot help admiring the noble traits in Peter's conduct, even though with the same breath we be forced to acknowledge some of his weaknesses; and herein all the Lord's followers find a lesson of encouragement, for though they find weaknesses and imperfections, if they find also the heart-loyalty to the Lord which was in Peter, they may continue to have courage and hope and to press on as did he, from victory to victory, and at last to have the prize, the reward of faithfulness.

When Peter learned that there was more meaning to the washing of the feet than merely its kindness and comfort, and its reproof of the lack of the spirit of humility amongst the disciples, he wanted, not only his feet, but also his hands and his head washed. Noble, thorough-going, whole-hearted, fervent Peter! But our Lord explained that this was not necessary, saying, "He who has been bathed has no need except to wash his feet, but is wholly clean." (V. 10—Diaglott.) Public baths were in use at that time, but even after having taken a general bath, on return to the home it was customary to complete the matter by washing the feet; and this seems to be the inference of our Lord's remark. The apostles had been with our Lord, for three years, and under the influence of his spirit of love, meekness, gentleness, patience, humility, had been greatly blessed—by "the washing of water through the Word" spoken unto them. —John 15:3; Eph. 5:26.

Humility Despised By the Wrong-Headed

There is an intimation in the Lord's words that the spirit of pride which had manifested itself among them had been inspired to some extent by their treasurer, Judas,—as evil communications always are corrupting. (1 Cor. 15:33.) This final lesson from their great Teacher was a very impressive one upon the eleven, whose hearts probably were in the right condition to receive the reproof and the lesson; but upon Judas, although his feet also were washed, the effect evidently was not favorable. The spirit of evil which had entered into him before the supper—the desire to obtain money, and the proposition to obtain it by betraying the Lord, evidently continued with him, and instead of being moved aright by our Lord's humility and service, he was the more moved in the opposite direction—to think little of him. So it is with all who have professed the Lord's name in every time. Those instructions, examples and experiences, which are working out blessing and proving beneficial to some, are proving injurious to others. The Gospel, in its every phase, is either "a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death." As it was God's goodness and mercy that hardened Pharaoh's heart, so it was the love and humility of Jesus that hardened Judas' heart, and these principles are still at work.—2 Cor. 2:16; Exod. 7:13.

After accomplishing the work of washing the feet of all, our Lord resumed his outer garment and reclined again at the supper (this was the Passover Supper—the Memorial Supper of bread and wine being instituted afterward). Our Lord now improved his opportunity and explained to them the meaning of what he had done. He pointed out to them that this menial service did not signify that he was not the Lord and Master, but signified that as Lord and Master he was not unwilling to serve the lesser members of Jehovah's family, and to minister to their comfort, even in the most menial service; and that they should not have been unwilling, but glad to render such service one to another.

The example which our Lord set was not so much in the kind of service (feet-washing) as in the fact of service. Nothing in this example, as we understand it, was in the nature of a ceremony to be performed by the Lord's people annually, weekly, monthly or at any other time; but the principle of his service constituted the **example,** and is to be observed amongst his followers at all times—they are to love one another and to serve one another, and to consider no service too menial to be performed for each other's comfort and good. . . .

All who are truly the Lord's followers should heed carefully and follow exactly the true example of the Master's spirit of meekness, humility and service. The whole thought is contained in his words, "The servant is not greater than his Lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things [if you appreciate these principles applicable to all the affairs of life], happy are ye if ye do them [if you live according to this rule, loving and serving one another]."—Vs. 16, 17.—Z. '08:109-111.

Exaltation via Humility

"Let him that would be greatest among you be servant of all. . . . One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."—Matt. 23:10, 11.

PRIDE is selfishness gone to seed. The selfish spirit greedily gathers to itself as much as possible of all that it esteems good and valuable—wealth, learning, honor, fame and distinction among men. A measure of success in the acquisition of these treasures further leads the selfish soul to a feeling of self-complacency, independence and indifference to the well-being of others, which, gradually but rapidly developing into arrogant and self-assertive pride, will continue to ripen with every gleam of the sunlight of temporal prosperity. As selfishness continues to ripen it swells itself to ridiculous proportions and delights to vaunt itself, and gloats over its imagined importance and worthiness of honor and praise.

Who can love such a disposition? It is utterly unworthy in all eyes save its own. No wonder, then, that it is written, "God resisteth the proud and giveth his favors to the humble." And again, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." How could it be otherwise? for these inflated values must at some time come down to a solid basis: wind will not always pass current for worth, and the punctured bubbles of earthly vanity will reveal the true status of every individual. And well will it be in the cases of those in whom the humbling realization does not awaken a spirit of rebellion and strife against God, which must inevitably end either in contrition or in destruction.

3 How much easier and how much wiser is the course of humility. The humble spirit seeketh not its own, is not puffed up, and does not attempt to speculate on inflated values, does not think of self more highly than it ought to think, but thinks soberly—neither overrating nor underrating its own acquirements or achievements. Humility strives always to do business on a solid basis, though it strives lawfully to acquire a real worthiness and to achieve the true glory of the divine commendation and favor.

4 The man who underrates his worth comes much nearer the truth than the man who overrates; for the fact is that no member of the fallen race, however favorably he may compare with some of his fellows more bruised by the fall, has anything whereof to boast. Consider, for instance, how meagre is the aggregate of human knowledge in every direction. As a race we are unable to trace our own history for centuries from the beginning, or to account for our origin, or to prognosticate our destiny. We are unable to fully comprehend the deep philosophy of our physical and mental organisms. There are mysteries within us and all around us which the wisest men cannot fathom; and only those narrow souls whose world of thought is bounded by the horizon of their own temporal interests ever vaunt their learning or wisdom, or feel that they have aught of which to boast. Their fellow-men may call them great and wise and reverend, but they know too well how small and ignorant they are and how unworthy of reverence, realizing that beyond the ken of their short vision are vast unexplored fields of knowledge. The truly noble soul feels humbled upon the borders of the vast unknown, thankfully accepts the divine revelation as to his nature, origin, destiny, etc., and patiently awaits the Lord's good time for a fuller understanding of all the mysteries of his wondrous grace. Pride of wealth or of fame is of still more ignoble character. Wealth selfishly hoarded and enjoyed certainly adds no degree of merit to the possessor, whether he inherited or acquired it; and fame among fallen men only proves that he who gained it has not to any considerable extent outstripped the popular limit of advancement. At best he is only abreast of his times. The man who has outstripped the current of popular thought is never a popular or famous man. Every such one has had to attest his true moral courage by facing popular opposition and enduring the popular reproach; or, in other words, by humbling himself.

In view of these considerations we see how just and wise is the divine rule for abasing the proud and exalting the humble, and how sound our Lord's counsel to his disciples, to cultivate the spirit of humility and to avoid even the appearance of pride. Observing the growth and manifestation of this spirit among the Pharisees, who did all their works to be seen of men, who loved the uppermost rooms at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues, and to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi, he said, "But be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren"—or, in the language of today, let there be no distinctions of clergy and laity; for one is your truly reverend Lord and instructor, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. "Let him that would be greatest among you be servant of all"; for the divine rule is that "whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

God's plan, viewed as a whole, shows that the exaltation of any individual or class of his creatures is always for the purpose of blessing others who are not so exalted. Thus, for instance, the exaltation of our Lord Jesus and his Church is for the blessing of all others; so also was the election and special favor to Israel to result in blessings to the nations not so favored.

Such a rule, it will readily be seen, is the prompting of the highest benevolence and of the fatherly love of God for all his creatures of every name and order, and manifests the depth of his wisdom as well as his love, both in rewarding the truly worthy and in bringing righteous and benevolent power forward for the accomplishment of righteous and benevolent ends. Thus in benevolent service and mutual love he will in due time bind together in one the whole family in heaven and in earth, through the mediation and service of the greatest of all servants, Jesus Christ.

Let us heed this counsel of the Master, and let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt us in due time. (1 Pet. 5:6.) We have already done so to some extent in refusing to own as our masters the various heads of the great nominal church. We own neither Luther, nor Calvin, nor Knox, nor Wesley, nor Campbell, nor any other man or body of men, as our master; nor do we own the pope of Rome as our pope, our Father: God is our father, and his anointed Son is our Lord and head. To them, and not to our brethren, let us look for the reward of faithfulness: "For," says the Apostle (Heb. 6:10), "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love which ye have shown toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

It is indeed no easy matter to tread the pathway of humility, to continually check the human aspirations and to keep the sacrifice on the altar until it is fully consumed. But thus it is that we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, lest we come short of worthiness for the prize promised. . . .

It is when we are thus humble and faithful that the Lord makes us his chosen vessels. Thus emptied of self, he can fill us with his spirit and with his truth.—Z. '93:5-7.

◆

Let us be alive to our privileges, our opportunities, that there may be no faint-heartedness, but a zeal for God and His Message and for the brethren who need our help.—Z. '16:5.

◆

None are so clear in their apprehension and appreciation of truth as those who are fully enlisted in its service. Let all who would run the race successfully look well to their **zeal** and **activity** in the Lord's work.—Z. '91:9.

A Word of Pastoral Counsel

We note a strong similarity in some respects between our spiritual and our natural experiences. We must partake of food if we would have strength. God's Word has provided this necessary food—milk for babes, strong meat for those of greater development. As we feed upon the gracious promises of God's Word, they strengthen our hearts and nerve our energies for patient endurance and active service for the glory of our King, for the blessing of the brethren, and for our own spiritual upbuilding. We perceive that one great lack amongst Christian people in general is that very many have ceased to partake of the spiritual food which the Heavenly Father has provided for the nourishment of His people. Many, therefore, are weak and sickly spiritually; and many have fallen asleep in respect to spiritual matters, having become overcharged with the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches, money-lust, and the excitement of business and pleasure. —Mark 4:18, 19.

Since we have come to a knowledge of Present Truth we find our spiritual appetite sharpening more and more. We are growing day by day by means of the nourishment supplied. We love the strong meat. We take delight in masticating it.

But here we need to note dangers. And these dangers we especially call to the attention of the Class. The first is that it is true in respect to spiritual feasting as in respect to natural feasting, that we need liquids as well as solids. By solids we refer to those spiritual foods which require mastication, mental assimilation, investigation, etc. From these we derive our strength. The liquid refreshments correspond more particularly to our spiritual fellowship which is non-doctrinal; namely, exhortation, praise, worship, testimony respecting the Lord, our personal relationship with Him, His gracious providential care over us, etc. The Class that neglects the liquid refreshments is sure to feel the loss. As the physical system requires the liquids to carry the nutriment properly to all parts, so the spiritual organism requires the liquid refreshments to carry the strength of the nutriment of the doctrines of Christ to every member for the mutual refreshment of all.

Again, it is noticed that while both solids and liquids are needed, it is preferable not to use the two at the same time. He who washes his solid food down with liquid refreshment fails to get all the nutriment out of it, because he masticates less. As the process of digestion is begun in the mouth, where the saliva is mixed thoroughly with the food, the washing of the food down with liquids interferes with an important part of digestion. Therefore, all physicians advise that little liquid be taken with the solids, but that at appropriate times a sufficiency of liquids be supplied to the system. So we advise in the spiritual eating—that the solids, the doctrines of the Word of God, be thoroughly masticated, with comparatively little of testimony or exhortation intermingled—just a little of praise and worship to give a proper setting. Then let the spiritual liquids be appropriated in full measure at suitable seasons.—Z. '15:238.

KERNELS KERNELS KERNELS

Gratitude is one of the smallest returns imaginable.—Z. '06:159.

◇

The light is not merely the message which we bear upon our lips, but also the influence which emanates from our daily lives.—Z. '09:45.

◇

The Lord has so arranged it that we may not feel ourselves entirely self-sufficient, and that even our proper leaning upon the Lord shall seem to require also the co-operation, encouragement, sympathy and love of the fellow-laborers.—Z. '03:40.

◇

It is a privilege to serve our Lord at any time and in any manner, but a special privilege came to the faithful in the end of the Jewish age; and similarly a special privilege of service has come to God's people now, in the end of this age.—Z. '02:119.

◇

With the consecrated the chief thought should not be ease, nor large profits, nor best wages, but **best conditions**: best conditions for personal development in Christian graces, and best conditions for rendering service to the Lord, his people and his truth.—Z. '96:192.

◇

At the close of the Millennial Age, when all mankind shall have reached **perfection of human nature** (or, failing to do so, shall have been destroyed in the Second Death), there will still be a distinction between this camp of the Holy Ones and mankind in general. Why the distinction when all are perfected? Because, we believe, the Divine intention was to show that even when mankind shall have reached perfection the Ancient Worthies will still in some sense be separate and apart from the remainder of the perfect race. It is at that time that we understand the Ancient Worthies will be changed from earthly to heavenly organism.—Z. '09:138.

Published by the Standfast Bible Students. Address all communications: Standfast Bible Students, Scott Building, 2659 Douglas Street, Victoria, B. C.

Old Corn Gems

No. 127

"*And they did eat of the OLD CORN of the land on the morrow after the Passover . . . and the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the OLD CORN of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.*" Joshua 5:11-12.

A SAFE RULE

"WHERE A BROTHER GIVES AN INTERPRETATION OF A SCRIPTURE WHICH DIFFERS FROM THAT GIVEN BY BROTHER RUSSELL AND BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION SEEMS REASONABLE AND IN HARMONY WITH THE PLAN OF GOD, THEN WE BELIEVE IT A SAFE RULE TO FOLLOW BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION, FOR THE REASON THAT HE IS THE SERVANT OF THE CHURCH, SO CONSTITUTED BY THE LORD FOR THE LAODICEAN PERIOD; AND THEREFORE WE SHOULD EXPECT THE LORD TO TEACH US THROUGH HIM. WHERE THERE ARISES A DOUBT IN THE MIND AS TO WHICH INTERPRETATION IS CORRECT, THEN IT IS ALWAYS SAFER TO RESOLVE THAT DOUBT IN FAVOR OF BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION. WE BELIEVE SUCH TO BE IN HARMONY WITH THE LORD'S WILL."—Z. '18: 51.

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Significance of Eating Our Lord's Flesh and of Drinking His Blood

> "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you."—John 6:53.

IN this chapter the Lord is addressing the Jews, who believed not on Him, but murmured because He told them He was the true Bread from Heaven. His expression, "eat the flesh and drink the blood," had a deep spiritual significance which none but **Israelites indeed** could receive. And this is still true today. The world, when dealt with in the next Age, by Jesus, will indeed have the opportunity to eat of His flesh—to appropriate the merits of His sacrifice; but they will have no opportunity of sharing in His Cup—of drinking His blood. Symbolically, the Cup signifies the sacrificed life. The world will have no share in the sufferings of Christ, represented in the Cup.

Our Lord's words imply, If you accept My proposition of the Gospel Age, you may have life, and have it more abundantly than man has ever had it or could have it. You may have **inherent** life—"life **in you.**"

The Two Salvations Pictured

There is a difference, we believe, maintained in the Scriptures between the **bread,** which symbolizes the Lord's **flesh,** and the **wine,** which symbolizes His **blood.** The Church, in order to be accepted of the Lord as members of His glorified Body, must share in both of these by **participation.** The loaf, as the Apostle explains, not only represents to us our Lord, as the Bread of Life necessary for us, but it also represents His members broken as our Lord was broken; and the wine represents not only our Lord's blood, but also the blood of the Church—sharers with him in His sacrificial sufferings.—1 Cor. 10:16, 17.

The privilege of sharing our Lord's Cup is not for the world. They will not share in the sufferings of Christ, because all opportunity to share in His sufferings and glory will have ended when the Church is glorified. The Lord said, "Drink ye all of it"—drink it **all.** There will be none for the world to drink. And the Church class "fill up that which is [left] behind of the afflictions of Christ."—Col. 1:24.

"The flesh of the Son of Man" represents Restitution to human privileges, i.e., the means to its attainment, and restores to man the life which he had forfeited—the life lost in Adam—human life, earthly life. It will be the gift of God through Christ. But the **supplying** of this Bread will not be sufficient. The world will need to eat of the Bread and to have the assistance the Lord will give them through His Kingdom. Jesus said (V. 51), "I am the living Bread which came down from Heaven; if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever."

From one viewpoint the world may be spoken of as not dead. They have lost their right to life, but God has made arrangements through Jesus by which that life will be restored. It was lost in Adam, but will be restored through Christ, the second Adam. During these six thousand years the world has been in a starved and fallen condition. But God has provided this Bread and it will be for them in the Millennial Age.

It is not shown symbolically anywhere in the Scriptures that the world will **partake** of the blood, and thus participate in the sufferings of Christ. Only a few are represented as partaking of the blood. This is shown in Leviticus 16. The blood sprinkled the second time on the Mercy-Seat is for all the people, thus satisfying Justice. This represented the release of **all humanity** from the sentence of death, giving **all** an opportunity to eat of the Bread and not die.

In another picture, we find the blood used representing man's acceptance of the Divine arrangement. In the sealing of the Law Covenant, which is a type of the New Covenant, Moses first sprinkled the **books of the Law,** representing the **satisfaction of Justice.** Then with the same blood he afterwards sprinkled **all the people.** (Heb. 9:19; Exod. 24:8.) The sprinkling of the books of the Law required only a few seconds; but the sprinkling of the people required a **long time.**

At the beginning of the Millennial Age—as soon as the Church is joined to her Head beyond the veil—the blood will be sprinkled to satisfy Justice for the world. Then, as the Mediator, Christ will proceed to do a work for all who will receive it. And that work is symbolically represented as sprinkling the people with the blood. In other words, every member of the race will be privileged to come into Covenant relationship with God through the Mediator, by accepting the terms which He will hold forth during the Millennial Reign.

Most Valuable Food and Drink Known

If they meet the requirements during Messiah's Reign, by the close of that period they will be perfect; and He will present them before the Father, and all will be received into full covenant relationship with Him, who endure faithfully the test then applied.

In our **context** (V. 54), we read, "Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life." Our Lord's statements in many instances are made so broad that they cover, not only the Little Flock, but the Great Company as well, and therein show great wisdom. In this verse the Lord does not say, "hath eternal life" **in him;** for of those who now make a Covenant of sacrifice, and become sharers of the Cup as well as of the Bread, there are some who will not attain to inherence of life—immortality—but who will come through great tribulations and attain life on a lower spirit plane. They will not have **inherent** life, though it will be **everlasting** life. Those who attain immortality will have **eternal life,** on the **highest plane.** Those of the Great Company will have eternal life, but not immortality—not **life in themselves.**

When our Lord said, "For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed" (V. 55), we understand Him to mean that this is the most valuable food and drink ever known. No other bread has such value, and no other drink could be so precious as this, by the partaking of which one may attain to glory, honor and immortality—the Divine nature, life in itself.

Antitypical Showers of Manna

The Bread from Heaven was our Lord's flesh, which He was to give for the life of the world. And Jesus explains this to be what was typified by the manna that fell in the wilderness. He said, "Your fathers did eat manna [in the wilderness], and are **dead.** He that eateth of this Bread shall live forever." He also said (John 12:24), "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and **die,** it abideth alone; but if it **die,** it bringeth forth much fruit." And He did fall into the earth and die. And the Church become sharers with Him in His death. The Church participates in His sufferings and death, which the world will never do. They share in its **outcome.**

All the work of this Age, is the getting ready of the food for the world, and of the blood which will be sprinkled upon them. But the Message of our Lord in our text was not intended for the world. As He tells us, "Unto **you** it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven."

It is only a special class who could know anything about the Mystery of God all through these nineteen hundred years — the two millenniums. These things have been hidden from the world in general. But now we believe that the time is here when they are to be given to the world, making the world conscious of the blessing that God has in store for them soon. The Scriptures tell us that the Mystery will be unfolded during the sounding of the seventh trumpet—which is now sounding. This making of these truths known, therefore, would seem to be the showering of the manna.—Z. '13: 328, 329.

"Now Is Christ Risen"

Matthew 28:1-20.

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world (age)."—Matt. 28: 20.

THE Scriptures give very particular details respecting the death of Jesus and his burial in Joseph's new tomb, wherein none had previously been buried and respecting the sealing of the tomb and the setting of a guard lest the body should be stolen at night. But while these matters are interesting to us, they probably do not now have the same importance that they had when they were written. From this distance we feel inclined to ask about the general character of Jesus' disciples who declared his resurrection, rather than to inquire particularly respecting all the details which they enumerated. In broad terms we say, If the characters of the Apostles prove themselves satisfactory to us, we are ready to take their word respecting the resurrection of Jesus and his subsequent appearances to them. On the other hand, if they were bad men or otherwise unworthy to be believed, no amount of details respecting the tomb, the watch, the seals, etc., would be satisfactory to us, because cunning and designing men could make up the story to suit their desires.

But it was not so at the time of our Lord's death and resurrection. It was then very necessary that every little detail should be explicitly specified. The **parts** of three days and nights, for instance, were important to them because of Jesus' words, which they remembered. He likened his period in death to the period in which Jonah was in the whale's belly. There are some today disposed to quibble over the matter and to claim that Jesus died on Thursday and not on Friday. Surely, however, all can concede that it matters nothing to us on which day of the week he died, nor the number of hours he was in the tomb, whether seventy-two hours to the minute or a less exact time. With us the important question is, Did he die? Did he arise from the dead? Was there a value in his sacrificial death, from the Divine standpoint, and how is that value or merit made applicable to mankind, and have we obtained our interest therein according to the Divine terms?

"He Rose Again on the Third Day"

With the majority of Christians for these many centuries we agree that Jesus was in the tomb parts of three days and nights; that he died on Friday afternoon, and that he arose from the dead early on Sunday morning. But we are not contentious. Let who likes believe that he died on Thursday or Wednesday or Tuesday or another day; this is a matter of no importance. The all-important matter is, "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." (Rom. 8:34.) The stone at the mouth of the sepulchre was not a large boulder, as many suppose, but was shaped like a wheel—like a large grindstone. It rolled in a groove, but, being heavy, would be cumbersome and difficult for the women, as suggested.

The sorrowing friends of Jesus did not realize at the time what he had taught them respecting his crucifixion and subsequent resurrection. Hence they were surprised with every incident of their experience on that eventful Sunday morning. The angel appeared in dazzling brightness, that he might not be mistaken for a man. He told the women who brought spices for the embalming of the Lord's body that their Master was risen from the dead—that he was no longer dead; that they would see him in Galilee; and to so tell his disciples. On the way Jesus met them and revealed himself to them. Another account tells us that Mary, separated from the others, met Jesus alone and, mistaking him for the gardener, asked whither the corpse had been removed. Then Jesus revealed himself to her. Recognizing her Master she clasped him by the feet as though afraid that he would leave her; but, different from his previous course, he declared, "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father and your Father, to my God and to your God." Instead of delaying to commune with me, hasten at once to tell Peter and the others of my resurrection. How careful was the Master that Peter should be mentioned by name, lest he should feel that he was forever rejected because of having denied him!

For forty days Jesus was with his disciples and during that time he appeared some seven or eight times, according to all the different accounts. Once he appeared as a gardener. Once he appeared as a traveler to two of the disciples going to Emmaus. Again he appeared on the shore of the Sea of Galilee to some of the disciples who were returning to the fishing business. They knew it was Jesus, yet he was different from formerly. But we read that they did not dare ask him respecting the matter. He appeared again to above five hundred believers in the mountains of Galilee, and finally, by appointment, he met the eleven at the top of the Mount of Olives and ascended out of their sight—a cloud receiving him. Only on two occasions are we informed that he appeared with nail-prints in his hands and the spear wound in his side. And on these two occasions we are distinctly told that he appeared in their midst, the doors being shut, and that he vanished again from their sight.

Thus did Jesus demonstrate to his disciples the fact that he was no longer dead, but alive, and additionally, the other fact equally important, namely, that he was no longer alive as a man, but as a spirit being. As St. Paul declares, "He was put to death in flesh, but made alive in spirit." But every precaution was taken to permit their natural powers of observation to comprehend the spiritual truths revealed to them respecting Jesus' resurrection and ascension. It was ten days after his ascension, on the fiftieth day from his resurrection, that the holy Spirit came, and thus demonstrated at once that the Redeemer lived and that he had appeared in the presence of God on the spirit plane and that his sacrifice had been presented and was acceptable to God; and, on the basis of his sacrifice and the imputation of his merit to the disciples, the sacrifices which they had presented in his name were accepted, and they were begotten of the holy Spirit, that they might also become New Creatures and share in his Kingdom and glory.

His Death and Resurrection Needful

It is needless that we seek to dispute as to which was the more important event—the death of Jesus or his resurrection from the dead. Both were equally important. Had he not died there would be no basis for a reconciliation of Adam and his race condemned to death. Had he not risen there would have been no one to apply the merit of his sacrifice. Had he not risen there would have been no call of the Church during this Gospel Age to be the Bride of Christ. Neither would there have been use for the promised Mediatorial Kingdom to be established at his Second Coming for the blessing of Israel and the world.

Thus Jesus explained to the two with whom he walked to Emmaus on the day of his resurrection, saying, O slow of heart to believe all that God hath spoken in the Law and in the Prophets! Was it not necessary that Messiah should die and should rise from the dead, that in his name repentance and remission of sins might be proclaimed? How could any be invited to come to God until a way had been opened, until the redemption price had been provided? Whoever can hear this message and accept it may properly be invited to repent of sin and to reform and to live contrary to the tendencies of his fallen nature, because, in so doing, through the Redeemer, he may attain unto eternal life. And if he ask, How about the things that are past, the answer would be the same. God's provision is for the remission of sins through the merit of the sacrifice of his only begotten Son.

The eleven Apostles were commissioned, "Go ye, disciple all nations." (V. 19.) This did not signify, as some suppose, a command to convert the world. It meant that they should make disciples out of people of all nationalities—and not any longer, as formerly, of the Jews only. And the Master's injunction has been fulfilled. Disciples, followers of him, have been found in all nations. But, as Jesus did not say, Convert all nations, neither has the Gospel message done this. Those accepting discipleship were to be baptized with Christ's baptism in the name or authority of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In all, these have been but "a little flock." (Luke 12:32.) But theirs is the "high calling" to joint-heirship in his Kingdom, which is soon to bless the world.

But even this permission to disciple people of all nations could not, and did not, begin at once. For three and a half years after the cross, in fulfilment of Divine prophecy, the Gospel message was kept from the Gentiles, until the door for them into this High Calling was opened by St. Peter—Cornelius being the first to enter it.

All disciples of Jesus were instructed to follow him, to take him as their pattern and example. Any instructions contrary to these are contrary to the words of the Great Teacher. And the Master said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the Age." He has been with his faithful followers to bless them, to comfort them, to strengthen them, to fellowship them, to safeguard their highest interests, though often at the expense of their temporal interests. And this promise of his Word, of providential guidance, was to continue until the end of the Age—then he would come again in a personal and official sense to exalt his Church, to establish his Kingdom, to bless Israel with the New Covenant arrangements, and thus to bless the world of mankind.—Z. '10:362, 363.

* * *

Divine providence has a thousand ways for its operation.—Z. '05:331.

The Knowledge of God---Its Value

"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto God and life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us by his own glory and virtue."—2 Pet. 1: 2, 3. —Reading of Sinaitic manuscript.

THE first question coming to us in connection with these words of exhortation is, To whom were they addressed? Are these the instructions given to sinners? Is this the way by which sinners are to approach to God? No. These instructions are addressed to those who are already justified through faith in the precious blood of Christ, as indicated in the preceding verse. They are addressed — "To them who have obtained like precious faith with us [the apostles] through the righteousness of our Lord and Savior,* Jesus Christ."

The suggestion clearly is that to become believers in Christ Jesus—even justified and fully consecrated believers—is not sufficient; there is to be a progress. . . . The thought of the Apostle is not year by year revivals with year by year back-slidings, but rather a continued **progression** in the new life. This thought is quite in contradiction of the experiences of very many who assume the name of Christ, which, alas! are too often expressed in the lines of the hymn:—

"Where is the blessedness I knew, when first I found the Lord?
Where is the soul-reviving view of Jesus and his Word?"

The prevalent idea amongst this class of Christians might be termed alternate subtractions and additions of grace and peace. They first get a blessing, then lose it, then find it again to lose it again, and thus continue. There is a logical reason why this course is so prevalent, and why so few know anything about the multiplication which the Apostle here mentions—"Grace and peace be **multiplied** unto you." The reason is that the majority of Christians lack a knowledge of those things which are necessary to preserve to them the grace and peace found through their primary faith in the Lord as their Redeemer; and much more do they lack a sufficiency of knowledge to **multiply** their grace and peace. . . .

The Apostle points out the proper course by which the believer, having made a proper start, shall continue onward and upward in his Christian development—multiplying his grace and his peace. It is all important, however, that he begin right. . . . We trust that our readers can sing with the spirit and the understanding also,—

"My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand: all other ground is sinking sand."

The true foundation, upon which we should build, is,—faith in the righteousness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,—faith that his sacrifice for sin was once for all a full and complete ransom-price for Adam and all his posterity, so that all of these, as in due time they shall be brought to a knowledge of Christ, may, if they will, obtain cleansing and eternal life under the gracious terms of the New Covenant. It is those who build upon this foundation that may hope to multiply their grace and peace. How?

The Apostle answers—"Through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." At first it may occur to some that this has but a slight meaning, and that it simply signifies that we come to know that there is a God, and that there is a Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. But the knowledge of God means far more than this to the advancing and developing Christian: to him it means an intimate acquaintance with the Father and with the Son, a knowledge of the "mind of Christ," which is a full and clear representation to us of the mind of the Father. We are to grow in this knowledge by studying the Word of God, by discerning through that Word the principles which govern the divine conduct, as to how divine justice, wisdom, love and power operate. These are progressive studies. Something may be learned the first day of our Christian experience, but the end of the first year should show considerable progress in the knowledge of the divine mind; the second year should show us a still further increase, and so on.

As our **intimate** knowledge of the divine plan and character increases, so must also our grace increase; for those who do not attempt to come into harmony, step by step, with that which they see of the divine character will soon lose interest in such knowledge, while those who have the interest which leads to further and further study must of necessity be growing in grace continually. And as they grow in grace, so also will they grow in peace; for peace also is a progressive thing. We had peace when first we found the Lord and realized the forgiveness of our sins; but those who have made progress in the knowledge of the divine plan and character have found their peace to be an ever-increasing one; and those who have advanced some distance in the good way can speak of it in the language of the apostles and realize it in their hearts as being "the peace of God which passeth all understanding."

The Apostle, continuing, assures us that through this knowledge of God is imparted to us as by divine power **"all things that pertain unto life and godliness."** What an assurance! This statement of the importance of knowledge for our Christian development in every direction reminds us of the words of our Lord, "This is life eternal; that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.) To **know God,** as the Apostle here explains, signifies an **intimate acquaintance** with "him that hath called us by his own glory and virtue." It is only as we realize something of the greatness and perfection of the divine character that we are properly able to estimate our own littleness and imperfection; only as we see the beauties of his gracious character can we become intimately acquainted with God, familiar with his graces and virtues. The influence of this knowledge and fellowship with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, reacts upon our own hearts, and has a cleansing and sanctifying effect. Thus the Apostle prays for some that they might grow in the knowledge of God so as to be able to "comprehend with all saints what is the length and the breadth, the depth and the height of the love of Christ which passeth [human] understanding." (Eph. 3:14-19.) Those beholding the divine character, even though but dimly, as through a glass, are thereby changed from glory to glory as by the spirit of the Lord. —2 Cor. 3:18.

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* Reading of Sinaitic MS.

The thought here brought to our attention is well illustrated in the modern art of photography. In photography there is necessary first of all a sensitized plate upon which the picture is to be reflected. Not any or every plate will serve such a purpose, but only one which has been specially prepared. This corresponds to the preparation of our hearts through repentance and justifying faith toward God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This first step is necessary before we can receive upon our hearts the impress of the divine character, its glory and virtue or strength. The second step is to bring the sensitized plate into good range with the features which are to be impictured upon it. This represents the proper attitude of heart; viz., full consecration to the Lord, and a desire to have his will to be our will and to have his character represented in our lives. The third step is the removal of all obscurity, all darkness, allowing the light to shine fully in upon the features to be copied. This finds its counterpart in the knowledge of God, which, as the light of truth scatters the darkness of error and sin and gives us clearer views of the divine character, and thus permits it to impress our prepared hearts and to stamp thereon his glorious character-likeness. Fourth, the sensitized plate must then be subjected to acids in order to the clearer development of the likeness. This also finds its correspondence; for our hearts, after we have gotten a clear view of the Lord, and been freely impressed with the glories of his character, require nevertheless the "fiery trials" of life, which, like the acid, only tend to develop the likeness the more perfectly. Fifth (for the correspondence continues), it is a well known fact that although photographs may be taken without the use of the precious metals, gold and silver, yet only when these are used will the photograph retain its color without fading. As heretofore seen, gold represents the divine nature, and silver represents the truth; and only in proportion as the likeness of our Lord is **fixed** in our hearts upon the basis of the truth and the divine nature can a lasting likeness be hoped for.—Rom. 8:29.

The world in general, of course, "knows not God," and very evidently the great mass of professing believers know very little about him. The Apostle Paul explains, that Satan, "the god of this world," is particularly interested in hindering any from obtaining the light upon the Lord's character and plan necessary to impicture it upon their hearts. He declares, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the glorious light of the gospel of Christ (who is the image of God) should shine unto them." (2 Cor. 4:4.) Here we see the constant and irrepressible conflict—the battle of darkness against the light, as our Lord explained it in his day, saying, "The darkness hateth the light, neither cometh to the light." But all who receive and rejoice in and obey the light are the "children of the light"; and after the image of the Lord has been impressed upon their hearts, such become light-bearers to others and so shine forth upon all with whom they come in contact, reflecting the light which is shining upon them from the divine source unseen and unappreciated by the world. #66: 11 '53

At present the influence of these lights is but small in comparison with what it will be hereafter. Now, the Lord's people are like lights set upon a hill which cannot be hid, and yet their influence upon the world is comparatively small. But of the by and by it is written, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"; "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his beams." This will be the great Millennial day; and as a result of the shining forth of the elect Church, we are assured that all darkness will disappear and the light of "the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth."

Proceeding, the Apostle assures us that, in order to the attainment of this intimate knowledge of God which multiples our grace and peace and gives us all things that pertain to life and godliness, God has "given unto us precious promises." . . . What are these promises, and who have knowledge of them?

Only those who are following in the pathway which the Apostle here marks out; who multiply their grace and peace, through an ever-increasing, intimate knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, —those who are seeing more and more clearly the divine character and plan, and whose hearts are in a susceptible and impressionable attitude, and upon which is being **fixed** more and more distinctly the image of God's dear Son, who is the express image of the Father. (Rom. 8:29.) Before these, shining out as helps by the way, in letters of light, are the "precious promises" of God's Word, which to other hearts are unilluminated, dark and almost meaningless. . . .

In view of what we already know of our Creator, especially as revealed to us in and through our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus, shall we not, as those who have come to see something of his glorious character, "press toward the mark" (Phil. 3:14) for the attainment of all that he may be pleased to reveal to us concerning himself, that thus we may be more and more partakers of his spirit, more and more conformed to his likeness, more and more acceptable, and by and by be actually and everlastingly accepted in the Beloved, to the full realization of all those blessings which God has in reservation for them who love him, and of which now we have the precious promises? Such promises and such knowledge properly inspire our hearts to love, obedience and self-sacrifice, that we may please him; and, as the Apostle says, "He who hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [the Lord] is pure."—Z. '97: 114-117.

Ingratitude

1 Sam. 12:1-25.

Golden Text:—"Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you."

AFTER Saul had been duly anointed, accepted and installed in office came the time for his coronation. This is in full line with the custom of the present time. King Edward VII of England was not crowned for nearly a year after he had assumed his office. The interim had given time for the development of an appreciation for their king on the part of the people by reason of his prompt action and good success in dealing with the situation at Jabesh. The people rejoiced much more in the coronation of their king than they would have done immediately after his choice under divine direction. If we carry out this thought and its application to the Christ, the lesson would be that the influence of the Church in the present time under the divine anointing and before the coronation, after the first recognition, will have a helpful influence upon the world. Mankind will then discover that the Adversary's blinding influences upon them would have been still greater, still more pernicious, had it not been for the intervention of the Royal Priesthood, who laid down their lives in the service of the truth under the guidance of their Head.

Concerning the attitude of the world toward the new Kingdom of Messiah when established, we remember the declaration of the Scriptures, "Many people shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." "The desire of all nations shall come." (Micah 4:2; Hag. 2:7.) All nations have been desiring the very blessing that God has in store for them during the Millennium; but the enemies of truth and righteousness have deceived them, putting light for darkness and darkness for light. When once they see clearly out of obscurity, the effects will be magical. Eventually every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Immanuel.

Samuel chose the occasion of Saul's coronation for a public rendering up of his own accounts. As God's servant, he had occupied the place of a Chief Justice to the nation, but the choice of a king relieved the prophet of political influence and responsibility. He called upon them as a whole people to declare whether or not he had ever taken from them aught that could be construed as a bribe, aught that in any sense of the word could be said to influence his judgment or decision of their matters. With one voice, the people declared that he had been faithful; and he in turn called upon the king and upon the Almighty Sovereign to witness this declaration of the people as a safeguard against anything that could ever be said against him in the future.

The statesmanship of Moses and Samuel stand out upon the pages of history as noble examples of courage and faithfulness to God and to the people. While it is true that few if any of the saints of God of this Gospel Age have occupied or are occupying positions of special political influence, nevertheless, the principle here set forth should be appreciated by all of God's saints under all conditions. Similar principles apply in the home, in the family. Every father ought to be able to make a similar appeal to his family as respects his nobility of purpose and honorableness in dealing with them. They should be able to witness that he had not been self-seeking in any sense of the word; that he had been faithful to his responsibility as a husband and as a father, seeking to use wisely the opportunities and responsibilities which were his by divine arrangement, caring for those under his charge, spending his life in considerable degree in their interest and certainly never against their interests. Every mother, every son, every daughter, in the family ought similarly to be able to call the fellow-members of the family to witness their faithfulness, their loyalty. The person who would be loyal in the family would be loyal to his nation, which is merely a larger family. Although Samuel had sons he had not sought to put them forward for political preferment. His faithfulness to the interests of Israel meant primarily his faithfulness to God. So it is always with God's people. They are not to trust in their own judgment merely in serving their family. They are to seek the wisdom from above; and this implies prayer and the study of the teachings of the Scriptures.

A Severe Arraignment

In verses 6-12, the prophet recounted God's faithfulness to the people of Israel, and their ingratitude in return. He reminded them that Moses and Aaron, those noble characters who had served them so faithfully, were of divine appointment; and that their success was because of their faithfulness to the Lord. He said, "Now, therefore, stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord of all the righteous acts of the Lord, which he did to you and to your fathers." He rehearsed to them their sins of idolatry, forgetfulness of the Lord's favor, and reminded them that chastisements were sent upon them not in anger, but in love, because the Lord desired to have them as his people, and because the chastisements were necessary for their good. He mentioned the names of a number of the prominent judges under whom the Lord had blessed them in recovering them from the power of their enemies. This is in full accord with the subsequent statements of the Lord on this subject. Through Isaiah the prophet, the Lord reminds the people that he used these enemies as "The rod of his anger" (Isa. 10:5); and through the Psalmist he reminds them of how he had cleansed them from their defilements and brought them back to himself, saying, "Moab is my washpot." (Psa. 108:9.) Thus for several centuries Israel had been under divine supervision, blessed according to the Covenant which God had made with them through Moses, when between the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim he caused to be pronounced upon them the blessing that would be theirs if they would be faithful to him, and the evil that would befall them if they forsook the Lord—evil that would be not only retributive but also purgative, intended to retrieve them from their evil tendencies.

The Israelites had not been rightly appreciative of the favor they enjoyed, rather they forgot, ignored the Lord in their affairs; and taking worldly wisdom on the subject, they concluded that their disasters had not been punishments from the Lord and blessings in disguise, but merely the result of their failure to be organized as a kingdom under an earthly head. This, Samuel related to them, saying, "When ye saw that Nahash, the king of the children of Ammon, came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us; when the Lord your God was your King."

Fallen human nature is considerably the same at all times and in all places; and so we find that amongst those who have named the name of the Lord during this Age, there have been similar tendencies to overlook the Lord as the great Head of the Church, the great protector of its interests, the great Governor of its affairs. Two centuries of the Gospel Age had not passed when the worldly spirit called out for more organization than the Lord had established through Jesus and the apostles. First it was the partizan spirit, whereby the people in various parts sought headship for their bishops, contrary to the arrangement which the Lord had made for them. This was the very spirit which the Apostle had reproved, saying, While ye say, I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, and I of Peter, are ye not carnal? Is not this sectarian spirit an evidence that you are not in the proper relationship to the Lord? Paul did not die for you; neither did Peter; neither did Apollos. (1 Cor. 1:11-13.) Your Redeemer is the only Head which should be recognized in this particular way. Though Paul and Apollos and Peter, and all of the Lord's faithful ones may be recognized and appreciated for their work's sake, it must be remembered that they are nothing more than the Lord's mouth-pieces and representatives, and that he alone is to be considered the Head of the Church. Such are to be appreciated only as they are faithful and loyal to him. Repeatedly during the last thirty years we have reminded the Lord's faithful of the experience of John on the Isle of Patmos. When receiving revelation of divine things, he fell down before the angel that showed him these things, to worship him. The Apostle John in a measure represented the faithful of the Lord's people in the end of this age. The more wonderful things of the divine plan are being revealed; and some might be in danger of worshipping the angel through whom the enlightenment was sent. It is well that all should remember the lesson given in that connection, in which the angel of the Lord rebuked anything that would be in the nature of personal idolatry, saying, "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, . . . worship God."—Rev. 19:10.

This same spirit of forsaking God as the real ruler and protector of all the interests of his people was further emphasized in the third century, when the rivalry of the bishops became pronounced, ultimately leading to the recognition of one of these as Primate or Pope. The Lord did not interfere to hinder the establishment of the papal views in the Church, even as he did not interfere to hinder natural Israel from choosing a king. Although they had chosen unwisely and contrary to divine instruction, the Lord would still be gracious to such as would seek to keep his way even under the new arrangement. He would be faithful, even though his people were not faithful. He would still do them all the good possible, but they would find that those conditions which they had made for themselves were injurious to their better interests, and thus might ultimately learn a lesson as respects the wisdom of God and its superiority to the wisdom and desires of their own fallen judgment.

In other words, as the Israelites were far better under such leaders as the Lord raised up from time to time—Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah and Samuel—he would, nevertheless, bless them as much as would be possible according to their course under the new arrangement which they desired. He would overrule the further experiences they would have under their kings, so that they might from these learn a great lesson in respect to the wisdom of God. So, too, in Spiritual Israel, the Lord did not forsake Israelites indeed, even in the midst of spiritual Babylon. . . .

God's Love for Them Not Quenched

From verses 13-18, the Prophet reviews the present situation of the people. They had rejected the Lord from being their King, but he had not rejected them and would not do so. They had not chosen the best, but the Lord did not cross them in this matter. He, therefore, had anointed their king as his representative, and their future blessings would depend now upon how truly they and their king would remain in accord with the Lord. Under the new arrangement, the king of their choice represented them, and a sin on his part, a deflection from obedience to the Lord would mean a national sin, for which the people as well as the king would be punishable; whereas, before, under the judges whom the Lord had raised up, if the judge was faulty, he was the Lord's agent and was punished as such; and, if the people were faulty, the punishment was theirs. Thus they had run a great risk in choosing a representative, in placing power in his hands, because the weakness and selfishness of humanity is such that the one thus exalted would be the more liable to transgress the divine statutes. In harmony with this, note how the sin of David was esteemed a national sin and brought a national penalty.—1 Chron. 21:12-27.

In summing up by the Lord's direction, Samuel gave a sign to corroborate his declaration that their calling for a king was a rejection of the Lord as their king, and a sin on the part of the people. There should be a thunderstorm in the midst of their harvest-time, an occurrence said to be very rare in southern Palestine. Coming promptly as a fulfilment of Samuel's prediction, it appealed to the people, convincing them for the first time that their course was a reprehensible one and a sin of gross ingratitude. They said to Samuel, "Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king."

The Sin of Ingratitude

Of all crimes, ingratitude appears to be one of the most inexcusable, and has so been esteemed amongst all people and at all times. Lycurgus, the great law-giver and statesman of Greece, wrote. "I make no law, perhaps, punishing ingratitude; I leave that for the gods to punish." Amongst the Athenians, if a slave, being freed, was afterward convicted of ingratitude toward his liberator, he was sent back again into slavery. Someone has written, "Gratitude is the fairest blossom which springs from the soul; and the heart of man knoweth none more fragrant." Shakespeare wrote:—

> "This was the most unkindest cut of all;
> For when the noble Caesar saw him stabbed,
> Ingratitude, more strong than traitor's arms,
> Quite vanquished him; then burst his mighty
> heart."

X/104-12-'21 Gratitude not only is a fragrant flower, but is indigenous to the soul of every true and noble heart. Accepting this standard, we are bound to conclude that comparatively few of the human family are noble in this respect. Even amongst the Lord's people the grateful seem to be comparatively few in number. This agrees well with the Apostle's statement that amongst the called are "not many noble"—chiefly the mean things of this world. (1 Cor. 1:26-29.) But this describes what we were when we were called. Who shall say that amongst those who have accepted the divine call and been made partakers of the divine favors—who shall say that these will remain ungrateful? Who shall say that the grace of God would not have a transforming influence on their hearts, so that however ungrateful they might be by nature, they would be so changed by grace that gratitude would be one of the chief elements of their disposition?

We believe that this is true; and that the Lord's people may in considerable degree measure their spiritual growth and development in this manner. If they find in themselves a spirit of murmuring and complaining against the Lord, it is a sure sign that they are ungrateful; for we know that he is faithful, and faith tells us that it is surely true that all the experiences of life permitted to come to us are working for our good. (Rom. 8:28.) Whoever has this faith can give thanks to the Lord and can rejoice even through his trial and sorrow. And if we have gratitude to God for his blessings and favors, if we cultivate the true nobility of heart which is impulsed by love and appreciation of divine care, it will make us appreciative of all the affairs of life and of all those with whom we have contact. We shall appreciate their good qualities, even if we cannot endorse all of their course; and whoever may do us kindness in the least degree must have our gratitude, our appreciation. Yea, with the Christian the standard must be still higher than this; for this should be the world's standard; as our Lord expressed it, "For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same." (Luke 6:32.) The standard for the Lord's people is still higher than that of gratitude, though it must include this. Our standard is benevolence, a forgiveness of those who transgress against us, and who say all manner of evil against us falsely. Such as attain this degree of character-likeness to their Lord receive an extra blessing from him in proportion, and are bidden to rejoice and be exceeding glad, and to know that they will have a reward.

Gratitude is therefore a keeping power in our hearts, there to repel the suggestions of the evil one, and to stop our imperfect fleshly mind if it attempts to assert itself. Gratitude is closely akin to love; and where they dwell together in the heart, there is little room for the Adversary to get in his work. On the contrary, ingratitude signifies a blindness of the mind in respect to justice. It speaks a low standard of character, in which the fruits of the Spirit of the Lord have not been well developed. Surely in any heart in which the love of God has been "shed abroad," ingratitude to him or anybody would be an impossibility. But where ingratitude gains a foothold, it admits its relatives—selfishness, pride, anger, malice, hatred, strife, evil surmisings, slander, back-bitings and other qualities which the Apostle enumerates as "works of the flesh and the devil." The Lord's consecrated people should daily search their hearts for any manifestations of selfishness or ingratitude, and should look well to the growing development therein of love and thankfulness and appreciation toward the Giver of all good, toward the brethren of the Household of Faith, yea, toward all with whom we have to do.

"Forbid, That I Should Sin Against the Lord"

After assuring the Israelites that they need not fear the Lord, that he is gracious, and that if they should follow him faithfully under a king or otherwise, he would surely never forsake them, the prophet proceeds to answer their query respecting his praying for them. He said, "As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." What a sublime character is thus brought to our view! . . . How few manifest this spirit, this same degree of likeness to the Lord's character and Spirit! In how many would the natural mind rise up and say, You have a king now, I have foretold you that it was a sin of ingratitude against the Almighty and against me, now go your way and see if what I have told you does not come true, and that you will be worse off.

On the contrary, notice the prophet's words. They show that he felt that he had a duty toward the people of Israel as his brethren, whether they felt similarly toward him or not. Although they had rejected him after his faithful service of many years, he assured them that he would pray for them and consider their very highest welfare, and that he would consider the matter from the very best standpoint, viz.: that it was a part of his duty, if he would be in harmony with the Lord, and that he could do nothing less than pray for them and seek their every good. How is it with those who slight us? Has the new spirit, the new mind of Christ, gained sufficiency of foothold for us to say as Samuel did, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord and cease to pray for you." Our Master's words instruct us even upon this, and say, "Love your enemies, . . . pray for them which despitefully use you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:44, 45.) Oh, yes! Those whose hearts are loving to their enemies, and loving to the Household of Faith, and above all, loving to the Lord, these would indeed be exceedingly sensitive if their hearts got into any attitude in which they would not be seeking the welfare of others, and praying for them. In such hearts there would be no room for anger, bitterness, strife, envying. In such hearts the love of God is shed abroad as represented by the holy anointing oil, the unction from the Holy One, which lubricates all of the sensibilities, smoothing not only the countenance, but also the tongue and the heart; for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and bitter water cannot come from a pure fountain. —Luke 6:45; James 3:11.

"The Lord Hath Done Great Things for Us"

After assuring them of his prayers on their behalf, Samuel told that he would continue to instruct them in the good and right way, and that he would do all of his duty toward them so far as their attitude of heart would permit. Then he urges the words of our Golden Text, "Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you." It is well that we note the distinction between the outward service and that of the heart, the mind, the affections. Outward service that does not spring from the heart will soon wither away, whether under adversity or prosperity. Hence the Lord always appeals to our hearts, "Give me thine heart." (Prov. 23:26.) So long as our heart is loyal to the Lord, it will control all of the products of life, because it will lead us to seek to know the Lord's will in everything. This will take us to the Lord in prayer. It will take us to the Word for instruction, and it will assist us in understanding the Word, giving us more and more the spirit of a sound mind.

The prophet gives us a lesson in the statement, "Consider how great things he hath done for you." Oh, yes! The difficulty generally is that consideration of these favors of God are crowded out of our hearts by other considerations, often selfish ones. The Israelites had passed through several centuries of divine guidance under the judges, and we have comparatively little knowledge of their progress during that time, the history of that period being much less ample than that which followed their organization as a kingdom; but we may be sure, nevertheless, that their spiritual interests were really forwarded more under the judges than under the kings. Centralization of government does not always mean greater blessing and progress. It usually means less in individuality and personal progress. A similar condition of things is noticed in the history of the Church. We have no history whatever of that period which followed the days of the apostles for more than a century, for the same reason that we have no history regarding the real Church, which is unrecognized of men. "The world knoweth us not." That the rule of the judges was superior to that of the kings is evident from the Lord's promise to Israel, "I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning." (Isa. 1:26.) The lawgivers as at the first will be the greater than Moses—the Christ, Head and Body. The judges as at the beginning will be the Ancient Worthies, in full authority as the prophets or teachers and judges amongst men, under the supervision of Immanuel's heavenly Kingdom.

Samuel appealed to fleshly Israel to remember the great things that God had done for them, as a ground for thankfulness and faithfulness—their delivery from Egypt, their guidance through the wilderness and their entrance into the land of Israel; but if we apply these words to Spiritual Israel, with what greater force do they come to us! The Lord has delivered us from Egyptian bondage, the bondage of sin and death. He has led us out of darkness into his marvelous light. He not only lifted our feet from the horrible pit and the miry clay, but he placed them upon the Rock, Christ Jesus; yea, more! he has put a new song into our mouths, even the loving kindness of our God. He not only forgave our sins, but accepted us in Jesus. He not only gave us precious promises to cheer our hearts in the wilderness journey, but has in reservation for us things exceeding great and precious, of which he has given us a glimpse or foretaste through the holy Spirit, an earnest of our inheritance.

Who that has gratitude of heart to the Lord for these blessings, who that is appreciative and thankful, would not be indeed seeking to serve the Lord in truth with all his heart! Who that is of this attitude of mind would fail to remember the Lord's Word and to seek divine assistance in complying with its requirements, remembering the statement, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." To such daily the commandments of the Lord amplify, enlarge. Daily he sees new forces, new meanings in these commandments. If he be thankful, if he be appreciative of the Lord's providence toward him in the past, the depths of meaning to God's commands would not be grievous to him; but he will still rejoice to go on day by day in sympathy with our Lord's words, "I delight to do thy will, O my God; Thy law is written in my heart." So it will be with us. As the Apostle says, We shall do his commandments, and they will not be grievous unto us, and this will be the evidence to us that we love God and that we are loved of him, and being sealed, impressed more and more by his Spirit, the spirit of truth.—1 John 5:2, 3.

"Ye Shall Be Consumed"

Of course there is an alternative. Those who do not enter into the Lord's service of a truth, with all their heart, those who do not continually and repeatedly consider how great things God has done for them, those who lack appreciation of his kindness and are resentful of his arrangement and leading, will be esteemed of him as wicked and as unfit for the glorious things which he has in reservation for the faithful. The Lord has made provision for the forgiveness of all of our inherited imperfections and weaknesses, and he has also made provision for our growth in grace and knowledge and love. While he is willing to cover our blemishes from his sight through the merit of the precious blood, he insists that we under that covenant shall develop the character which he has delineated and exemplified, the character of which love is the essence, and he rejects those who refuse to come to this standard of perfect love, or refuse all the provisions of divine grace; for it is not the Father's proposition to associate with his Son any except those who shall be copies of his character. This he has predestinated.—Rom. 8:29.—Z.'08: 200-203.

Plain Food for Clear Brains

Daniel 1:1-21.

"Watch ye; stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong."—1 Corinthians 16:13.

THOSE inclined to think of the people of three thousand years ago as merely monkey men may take a lesson from today's Study. It not only shows great intelligence on the part of some of the youths taken prisoners from the land of Israel into the land of Babylon, but it also shows a breadth of wisdom in the Babylonian king. The fact that King Nebuchadnezzar selected young men from the captives to be especially trained in the Babylonian schools as the king's advisers and wise men shows us a breadth of thought that is equaled by very few of the monarchs of today. . . . Would any of the nations of the world today show as much breadth of mind as did Nebuchadnezzar 2,500 years ago?

Not only was this done, but young Jewish captives proving their qualifications were given every opportunity to use their talents for the benefit of the nation adopting them. Daniel became Prime Minister in Babylon; and others of the Jewish captives attained to the rank of presidents of different divisions of the Babylonian Empire. Surely this shows not only that in some of the Jews there was merit of a high order, but also that there was an ability to appreciate this and an absence of narrowness and jealousy hindering the best interests of the empire.

Today's Study introduces us to the time when four of these Hebrew captives had been selected and been placed in Nebuchadnezzar's special school. This provision for them included not only their training, but also liberal provision for their physical welfare. They got a portion of the king's meat; that is, they shared in the food prepared for the royal family and supposed to be necessary for the development of the highest intelligence and ability.

Daniel and his three chums met the situation wisely. Under the Lord's blessing Daniel's meekness, gentleness and general nobility of character, derived from his knowledge of the true God, the faithful training of godly parents, and the knowledge of the Divine Law and promises, commended him at once to the loving favor of the chief eunuch. Thus the way was prepared for the favorable consideration of the proposition that these four young Hebrews would prefer to have plain food rather than the dainties and wines provided from the king's table.

The prince of the eunuchs hesitated to grant their request, believing that it would show unfavorably in the personal appearance of the Hebrews; and that this would be a reflection upon him and call for inquiry, and bring upon him the king's displeasure, and perhaps punishment. In reply to this, Daniel and his associates requested that the matter be tried out for ten days; and that if at the end of that time they seemed to be losing in flesh or otherwise inferior to the others, their request for a change of diet would be withdrawn; otherwise that they should be permitted to continue on the plain food.

Their request was that they be permitted to eat pulse. This, strictly speaking, seems to signify leguminous foods, such as beans, peas, etc.; but we surmise that the word is used in a general way to signify vegetables. The world is coming to recognize the fact that such leguminous foods as beans and peas contain the elements of nutrition generally sought for in flesh meats; and, more and more, flesh food is being discarded or limited and farinaceous and leguminous foods being substituted, and apparently in many cases to advantage in our day. We are not to think, however, that the Bible prohibits the use of flesh food. Christians are left to the exercise of their judgment and experience as respects what kind of food will best nourish their bodies and make them most useful in the Lord's service. That flesh meat is not to be despised nor considered sinful is abundantly proven by the fact that our Lord and the Apostles ate meat—lamb, fish, etc.

Loyalty to God and to Principle

There is a special reason why Daniel and his fellows desired to be excused from eating of the king's portion. It was customary at that time to offer meat before idols before partaking of it—as though wishing to have some special blessing upon the meat. While such a blessing would not really injure the meat—for an idol is nothing and could neither bless nor curse the meat—nevertheless, to eat such meat would more or less imply to the people that the young men were receiving blessings from the heathen gods, and that any wisdom or efficiency that they might have were thus derived. Doubtless this thought had much to do with the request for the change of the food.

Besides, although the Scriptures have not forbidden the use of alcoholic liquors, they do indicate special blessings upon those who abstain, as well as upon eunuchs. Daniel and his fellows were apparently fully consecrated to the Lord; and their being away from home in a heathen land, instead of relaxing their religious interests, seems to have deepened it. More than ever they realized their need of a true God and desired to be His true servants.

How the Lord greatly blessed these young Hebrews in their resolution to live upright, clean lives in the midst of the heathen is a part of this lesson. At the close of the ten days of trial the four young Hebrews were found to be advantaged by the difference of diet; and the record is that eventually, when the king began to inquire of them, he found them ten times more wise than the magicians and astrologers of his realm. Nebuchadnezzar's wisdom was manifested in his exalting of these young men to high positions in his realm. It paid the young Hebrews well for all their self-denials and their loyalty to God and to principle.

We believe that there is a general operation of Divine Law to the effect that whoever seeks to live conscientiously, cleanly, purely, honestly, will have compensations in his own heart, in his own life, whether he also reaches positions of honor amongst men or not. The ideal condition, of course, is that of the true Christian, who is not merely a church member—not merely an attendant at church services—but whose entire will has been given to the Lord. To such an one, as the Apostle explains, "old things have passed away, and all things are become new."—2 Corinthians 5:17.

Such go to the Bible to learn therein the will of the Lord concerning them, and then to the best of their ability live in harmony with that will. It regulates them as respects what they eat, what they drink, where they go, what they do, what they read, what companionship they cultivate, and as respects even their very thoughts. With this class everything is subjected to the Divine will. Of all the people in the world these have the best ground for happiness and peace, having the promise not only of the life that now is, but also of glory and honor in the life to come.—Z. '15: 330, 331.

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It is not for us to inquire why the Lord adopts certain plans which differ from those which our poor finite minds might arrange for him; rather it is for us to acknowledge that our wisdom is insufficient and that we should come humbly to the Lord to hear from his Word whatever he may be pleased to inform us respecting his purposes. As a matter of fact only those who approach a question from this standpoint need expect to see the truth or to "comprehend with all saints the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the love of God."—Eph. 3:18, 1 Cor. 2:12.—Z. '00: 87.

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"To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly"—to him that hath used, and profited by divine favor most faithfully, shall proportionately more and larger favors be granted; because he more than others has by his faithfulness become capable of enjoying and appreciating and profiting by additional favors. The Lord evidently loves fervency (warmth) of spirit or disposition. No doubt he appreciates some who are naturally cold and phlegmatic, but just as evidently he appreciates still more those who have a keener interest, a warmer love, and more intense manifestations. Noting our Lord's appreciation of zeal should lead all who are His followers today to strive after greater fervency of spirit, greater zeal and energy, greater interest in the Master's cause in all its branches.—Z. '00: 120.

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As a perfect human being Jesus' mind was active and strong, his reasoning powers were astute, his perceptives awake to every educating influence with which he came in contact, his moral perceptions always discarding every thing that was evil, and his memory treasuring up all that was worthy of a place in his mind.—Z. '94: 240.

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To all who unflinchingly stand for truth and righteousness in this evil day, is the blessed promise of God—"He shall dwell on high (above the fears, the unrest and the distress which will overwhelm the world); his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks (the Lord, the Rock of ages, the Most High shall be his hiding place); bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure" (he will be sustained with the bread of life and refreshed with the water of life both spiritually and physically). Blessed are all they that put their trust in the Lord, for they shall never be confounded.—Z. '95: 231.

Published by the Standfast Bible Students. Address all communications: Standfast Bible Students, Scott Building, 2659 Douglas Street, Victoria, B. C.

Bro H Evans

Old Corn Gems

No. 128

"And they did eat of the OLD CORN of the land on the morrow after the Passover . . . and the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the OLD CORN of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." Joshua 5:11-12.

A SAFE RULE

"WHERE A BROTHER GIVES AN INTERPRETATION OF A SCRIPTURE WHICH DIFFERS FROM THAT GIVEN BY BROTHER RUSSELL AND BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION SEEMS REASONABLE AND IN HARMONY WITH THE PLAN OF GOD, THEN WE BELIEVE IT A SAFE RULE TO FOLLOW BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION, FOR THE REASON THAT HE IS THE SERVANT OF THE CHURCH, SO CONSTITUTED BY THE LORD FOR THE LAODICEAN PERIOD; AND THEREFORE WE SHOULD EXPECT THE LORD TO TEACH US THROUGH HIM. WHERE THERE ARISES A DOUBT IN THE MIND AS TO WHICH INTERPRETATION IS CORRECT, THEN IT IS ALWAYS SAFER TO RESOLVE THAT DOUBT IN FAVOR OF BROTHER RUSSELL'S INTERPRETATION. WE BELIEVE SUCH TO BE IN HARMONY WITH THE LORD'S WILL."—Z. '18: 51.

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“Behold, I Am Alive Forever More.”---Rev. 1:18.

John 20:11-18.

NOT only was it necessary that Christ should rise from the dead and become alive forevermore in order to accomplish the great work planned of God and foretold in the prophets, and secured by his own sacrifice, but it was necessary also that indubitable proofs of his resurrection should be given to his disciples, for themselves and for us through them. . . .

The disciples realized that great events were transpiring, though how great and momentous was their character, they but slightly comprehended. They knew that their hopes as respects an earthly Kingdom, and their Master as an earthly Lord, had failed. They had vague, indefinite hope that all that he had said to them would in some manner have a fulfilment, but how or when or where, was beyond their conception. They knew not that a change of dispensation was occurring;—that the rejection of Israel after the flesh, and the calling of a new Israel after the spirit, was commenced; and that they themselves were amongst the first thus privileged to pass from the relationship of **servants** of God to that of **sons.**—John 1:12. . . .

It was necessary that our Lord, a spirit being, should manifest himself, as he had in the long past manifested himself to Abraham and Sarah, and as angels, under divine commission, had done on sundry occasions—**as a man.** (Gen. 18:1.) He must lead their minds step by step, and their thoughts link by link, from the cross and the tomb to an appreciation of his present exaltation as a spirit being, respecting which he himself explained to them, contrasting it with his previous condition, “All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me.” And this leading of their minds must be such as would gradually force upon them the conviction that he was **“changed,”** that he was no longer a man, and no longer subject to human conditions, as before his death. Having this thought in mind, we will have no difficulty whatever in seeing how our Lord inculcated these instructions during the forty days in his various interviews with his followers.

Mary Magdalene was honored in being the first to whom our Lord revealed himself. Scholars are generally coming to the opinion that it is a mistake to suppose that Mary Magdalene had ever been an unchaste woman—a mistake to identify her with the woman, in Galilee in the house of the Pharisee, who washed our Lord's feet with her tears and dried them with her hair, and of whom the account says, “She was a sinner.” The name Magdalene is now supposed to signify that this Mary was of or from Magdala, a town on the sea of Galilee. However, according to the Scriptural account, Mary Magdalene was a miracle of grace, for it is distinctly stated (Luke 8:2) that she had been obsessed of evil spirits, seven of them, whom the Lord cast out. Many think that she was a woman of wealth, and the evidences are that she greatly appreciated her benefactor, and esteemed it a privilege to follow him whithersoever he went. Not only had she come from Galilee to Judea, but she was near the cross at the time of his death, and the first at the tomb on the morning of the resurrection—“while it was yet dark.” Such love and devotion commend themselves to every sincere heart, and are surely worthy of emulation on the part of those who receive at the Lord's hands spiritual favors, forgiveness, reconciliation, the spirit of a sound mind, new hopes and aspirations, etc.

To harmonize the various accounts we must suppose that the women charged with the work of embalming our Lord's body lived in various parts of the city, and did not all arrive at the same hour. Mary Magdalene arrived first, and finding the tomb empty hastened and first found Peter and afterward John, both of whom at once ran to the sepulchre. Mary probably returning more slowly to the same place, arriving there after they and the other women had gone. It was at this second visit that the Lord revealed himself to her. She had been weeping and then stooped down in order to see through the low doorway, as though to reassure herself that it was empty, and then saw for the first time two angels in white, who inquired respecting her sorrow. The angels had doubtless been there when she was there before, but she had not seen them, because of their not choosing to “appear”: indeed, the Scriptures assure us, saying, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation?” And again, “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.”

Doubtless holy angels had in charge not only our Lord's body, but also the interests of his bereaved followers; and now, and on other occasions, some of these **appeared**—appeared, because they could not be seen without appearing, without a miracle—appeared as “young men,” though they were not men, but angels; not flesh, but spirit beings—assuming fleshly bodies for a time, that they might render the service necessary. In Luke 24:4 these same angels appearing as men are said to have been clothed in shining garments—so that they might not be understood to be men, but might at once be recognized as heavenly messengers. On the contrary, when our risen Lord as a “quickening spirit” similarly **“appeared”** in the flesh, in order to come closer to his followers, he did not appear in shining garments, but in ordinary apparel, assumed for the purpose, and in order that he might have the better opportunity for giving the instructions which his followers needed.

The words of the angels to Mary would be calculated to assuage her grief, for they manifested no grief, and by their question implied that she had no ground for it. At this juncture something drew Mary's attention, and turning around she discovered another person near her, evidently in ordinary garments, whom she presumed to be a servant of Joseph of Arimathea, the owner of the garden—his gardener. She considered herself a trespasser to some extent, and assuming that our Lord's body was not wanted longer in the rich man's tomb she inquired where he had been taken, that she might take the proper steps to care for his reinterment. Then Jesus (for it was he who had "appeared" in the form of a gardener) spoke her name: "Mary!" At once she recognized the voice, and crying, "Master, Teacher!" she fell at his feet, grasping them as though fearful that somehow, if she let go, she might never get the opportunity of touching his blessed person again. Our Lord's words to her, "Touch me not, but go, tell my brethren," would more properly be translated, Cling not to me, etc.—for I have not yet ascended to my Father; I will be here a while yet, before I ascend, but your great opportunity for clinging to me and trusting in me will be after I have presented to the Father, and he has accepted, the great atonement for sins which I have just accomplished at Calvary. Mary's touch could do our Lord no harm, for others touched him subsequently, as the record shows; but our Lord would lead Mary's mind away from a mere clinging in the flesh,—to the higher relationship and intimacy of heart and of spirit, which would now be possible, not only for her, but for all his followers, not only then but ever since. In a spiritual way the Lord's people may be exhorted not only to "look unto Jesus," the Author and Finisher of our faith, but also to "cling to Jesus," and by faith to place our hands in his that he may lead us all through our pilgrim journey.—Z. '01:125-127.

Was It Not Necessary?

"And he said to them, "O thoughtless and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary for the Messiah to have suffered these things, and to enter his glory? And beginning at Moses, and through all the prophets, he explained to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."—Luke 24: 25-27.

THE occasion of this utterance will be remembered: our Lord thus addressed two of his disciples on the way from Jerusalem to Emmaus after his resurrection. They were discussing the strange and wonderful event of the few days previous, when a stranger suddenly drew near and, walking with them, said, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk and are sad?" And, not recognizing the stranger as the Lord himself, one of them said, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" And he said unto them, "What things?" And they said unto him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre, and when they found not his body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. And some of those with us went to the sepulchre and found it even as the women had said; but him they saw not."

Then follow our Lord's words, "O thoughtless and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary for the Messiah to have suffered these things, and to enter his glory?" The necessity of those things was the great lesson which he endeavored to impart to these confused and bewildered, but earnest, disciples.

From the standpoint of Christians today the necessity of those things is much more easily discerned than from the standpoint of the early disciples, in close proximity to those marvelous events. But, nevertheless, there are some today also who thoughtlessly stumble into very erroneous conclusions drawn from a reckless and heedless interpretation of the Master's plain teaching. They say, Yes, it was necessary for Christ to suffer because the path of suffering is the only path to glory. Christ had to suffer and so all must suffer; and the glory will follow as a natural consequence, as these words of the Lord teach. This is a very plausible argument to many who lean too much to their own understanding. A more reflective mind would say, No, that is not sound logic; for the glory of Jehovah was not attained through suffering; nor was that of the angels, nor was that of the Son of God in his pre-human existence thus attained. And a more attentive mind would say, No, that was not the ground of necessity for his sufferings to which the Lord referred; for he called attention to the divinely inspired prophecies which of necessity must be thus fulfilled. The suffering was necessary, because it was a feature of Jehovah's plan for human redemption, and was so expressed by the prophets; and we know that unless it were a feature of that plan, Jehovah would not have required it. The Apostle Paul tells why it was necessary to the plan, saying that it was in order to manifest Jehovah's righteousness in remitting the sins of the already condemned world, showing that he is just, and yet the justifier of the condemned ones who believe in Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation, a satisfaction, a substitute for them—who also freely gave his life as a man, his humanity, a ransom for the many—for the numerous posterity of Adam who had inherited his sin and condemnation.

Hear again the significant query of the Master, "Was it not necessary for the Messiah to have suffered these things?" The query is designed to awaken the thoughtless to a close observance of the justice and wisdom of Jehovah's course in this matter. Suppose for a moment that God had promised mankind salvation from death without this, which our Lord terms a "necessary" provision, what would have been the result? Thoughtful minds will at once see that such a course would have proved (1) That God is a changeable God, declaring at one time that the wages of sin is death, and afterwards reversing his decision and granting life to the condemned; (2) That either in the first or in the second case he was unjust—either that the penalty of death was too severe and therefore unjust, or else, if it were not unjust but a righteous penalty, that he was unjust in reversing such a righteous decision; (3) Such a variable course would unsettle all confidence in God. We would be continually led to question his righteousness and wisdom, and could never feel assured against a sudden and unaccountable change of his attitude and dealing toward us. If he promised us life and happiness today, we could not know that tomorrow he would not take back his word and consign us to misery or death.

Such would have been our sad condition had not this necessity to which our Lord referred been fully met by the sufferings, even unto death, of "the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all," in compliance with the wise and just plan of God for human redemption. (1 Tim. 2:6.) By this means mankind is justly released from the just penalty which God pronounced against us; for a loving, benevolent Redeemer took our human nature and then sacrificed it in our behalf—thus bearing, in our room and stead, the exact penalty due to Adam and inherited from him by all his posterity. Thus our debt was paid, and all who have faith to believe in the promise of life through Christ are now legally free from the condemnation under which they were born, though the appointed time for their actual release has not yet come. They hold in their possession a promissory note—the sure covenant of Jehovah—sealed with the precious blood of Christ, and payable at the "time appointed," the Millennial Age. Thus they are free men in Christ, they are saved by faith, though they still walk through the valley of the shadow of death. And, comforted by the rod of divine discipline and the staff of divine counsel and favor, they fear no evil, knowing that in due time the promise of lasting life shall be fully verified to them.

But there was another feature of necessity in the divine plan, to which our Lord referred— "Was it not necessary" also "for the Messiah to enter his glory?" The question is to you and to me as well as to those early disciples; and the fact of its being propounded implies our ability to discern the necessity. Yes, it was necessary. Why? Because we needed, not only a redeemer to assume and cancel our past indebtedness, but also an able teacher and leader—a prophet and king—to break the fetters of sin and death and lead us out of our bondage. If the promise of life and liberty were given alone, without such help, we would still be in the same sad state; for the prison doors of death are strong and securely barred and bolted, and we cannot burst them open; and the fetters of sin and sickness, of mental, moral and physical imbecility, are firmly clasped about us, and we have not the power to shake them off. And so we feel the necessity of a mighty deliverer as well as of a loving redeemer. And, thank God, in his only begotten and well beloved Son we have both. He is our Deliverer as well as our Redeemer, our Savior, our Prophet, our Priest and our King—strong to deliver and mighty to save; for though as a man he sacrificed all that he then had—his humanity—even unto death, God, accepting that sacrificed humanity as the price of our redemption, renewed his existence in a higher nature—even in his own divine likeness. And thus this second necessity of the divine plan is met in the provision of one who has "all power in heaven and in earth given unto him," and who is therefore abundantly able, not only to awaken the redeemed race from the silence of death, but also to fully establish all of them who desire and will accept of his favor in everlasting righteousness and consequent worthiness of eternal life. Thus, through the blessings of his kingly and priestly office, he will, in due time, present all the willing and obedient faultless before the presence of Jehovah's majesty, to receive his benediction and to enter fully into the eternal joys of his loving favor. In his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand—in his favor—there are pleasures forevermore.—Psa. 16:11. June 18.

Consider then, O thoughtless ones, how necessary it was that the Messiah should both suffer death, and also enter his glory. Both the humiliation and the exaltation meet our necessities in such a marvelous way that we clearly recognize the fact that only divine wisdom and love and benevolence and grace could have planned the wondrous scheme. "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Not only was the death and resurrection and exaltation of Christ thus necessary to God's plan of salvation as viewed from a philosophical standpoint, which the Lord would have us thoughtful enough to observe, but as viewed from the standpoint of prophecy the necessity is also clear; and we should not be slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Beginning at Moses, the Lord traced this line of prophecies for the two with whom he conversed, showing how they had been fulfilled in himself; and though his words are not recorded we still have Moses and the prophets and can read them for ourselves. Moses said to Israel, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me: unto him shall ye hearken." (Deut. 18:15.) And here, in the risen Christ, was the beginning of the fulfilment of that promise. Moses had also in the typical ceremonies of the Day of Atonement prefigured both the sacrificial sufferings and the subsequent glory of Christ. The sacrifice of the bullock (Lev. 16:11) prefigured the former, and Aaron — in his robes of typical glory and beauty coming out of the tabernacle after the sacrifice had been accomplished and the blood presented in the "Most Holy" as a typical propitiation for the sins of Israel, and lifting up his hands and blessing the people, till then lying prostrate on the ground to represent the whole human race in death—prefigured the resurrection glory of Christ and his coming out of the Most Holy presence of Jehovah to bless the whole world in the Millennial age. Was it not indeed necessary to the fulfilment of these divinely instituted types, says our Lord, for the Messiah to have suffered these things and to enter his glory?

Again, Moses testifies of Christ in recording the incidents of the typical sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham, who received him again from the dead in a figure (Gen. 22:1-18; Heb. 11:19), thus prefiguring Jehovah's offering of his only begotten Son and receiving him again from the dead.

Again, there were all those prophecies which so particularly described the circumstances of his death—"He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth"; "He made his grave with the wicked [the sinful human race] and with the rich [in the tomb of the rich man, Joseph of Arimathea—Matt. 27:57] in his death" (Isa. 53:7, 9); "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken" (Psa. 34:20); "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [sheol, the grave], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psa. 16:10); "They pierced my hands and my feet"; "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture"; "They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." (Psa. 22:16, 18; 69:21.) How minutely all of these had been fulfilled.

And Isaiah (53:5) said, "He was wounded [not for his own, but] for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement for our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." And Daniel (9:26) said, "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself." And Zechariah (13:1) said, "There shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness." Then they told of his glorious reign, saying—"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin. . . . the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." "He will swallow up death in victory."—Isa. 53:10; 25:8.

Yes, it was necessary to the fulfilment of all these prophecies that Christ should both suffer death and that he should also enter his glory; and in these blessed facts all thoughtful believers may rejoice. A little while and all the members of his body, shall have filled up the measure of his sufferings and shall enter into his glory. Then shortly his glory will be revealed, and all flesh shall see it; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.—Isa. 40:5.—Z. '92:115-118.

St. Paul's Pastoral to Thessalonica

1 Thess. 5:12-24.

Golden Text:—"See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good."—V. 15.

THIS might be termed a lesson on character building. It was written from Corinth during the year and a half in which St. Paul labored with his associates in the latter city, as detailed in our last lesson. The first epistle to the Thessalonians, of which our lesson is a part, is credited with being the first of the New Testament writings which have come down to us, A.D. 52.

The epistle is a very fatherly one, very gentle and loving. When we remember that the believers addressed were merely "babes in Christ" less than a year old we are inclined to amazement that the Apostle should consider them prepared for teaching on so high a plane. But the fact is that the cause of Christ was very unpopular because of the pureness of its message, because it presented no comparison with the worldly spirit and because it called for a full consecration, not only of heart, but also of daily living, to the will of God and to his providences.

Let us recall to mind the setting of this epistle. Less than a year before its writing the Apostle and Silas arrived from Philippi bruised and haggard, surely, as a result of their experiences in the riot and from the beating and other severe experiences connected with the dungeon at Philippi. It will be remembered that they had peace but a short time at Thessalonica, during which they made known the Gospel of God's grace. Then the Apostle was obliged to flee again, but subsequently heard from the believers at Thessalonica through Silas and Timothy. With a fatherly love he assayed several times to revisit the believers, but was always providentially hindered. Possibly these hindrances led up to the writing of this epistle, more profitable for them, as well as advantageous to all of the Lord's people throughout the world during eighteen centuries. Thus do God's providences "work together for good to those who love him." After faith has been instructed and developed through the wonderful lessons of God's Word, it becomes a firm foundation for peace and joy, comfort and rest under all conditions.

The Word Character Significant

The word character in Greek is exactly the same as in English. Originally it was the name given to a sculptor's tool—the forming chisel used in the development of the Greek statuary. Gradually the word broadened in its meaning to include not only the tool used, but the tooling process, the formation or shaping of the sculptures. Gradually also it came to signify the peculiarities or characteristics of a piece of sculpture. The word today in its English usage had reached a still higher plane and associates itself with the Divine character, which is the perfect example, and with humanity as it possesses more or less of the Divine characteristics.

When St. Paul writes in Hebrews I. of Christ's being the "express image" of the Father's person, the phrase "express image," in the Greek is the word character. How beautiful the thought that our Lord Jesus, through whom the Father has spoken to mankind, explaining his Justice and his Love and his provision for our reconciliation—this one was the express image, the character-likeness of the heavenly Father, full of grace and truth! . . .

As the sculptor must first have an ideal in his mind before he can follow it and hew the image from the rough stone, so must we recognize the true ideal of life and then follow it with all our hearts, with unwavering will. How important, then, that we have proper ideals before our minds; that we have a purpose in life; that it be a noble purpose of high standard! Herein is the value of the doctrines of Christ, the teachings of the Scriptures. They set before God's people the truest and noblest ideal and thus assist the pupils in the school of Christ in attaining higher and grander results than would be otherwise possible for them.

It has been said that every man is the sculptor of his own career. To a large extent this is true, but with the Christian it is different. He gives himself to the Lord and the Lord undertakes to work in him "both to will and to do his good pleasure." Again, as it is written, "We are his workmanship." True the Lord does not do the work in us without our co-operation; but in our case he is the Principal or Superintendent and we are the assistants co-working with God for the attainment of that which he has set before us as his ideal, his design for us. The glorious pictures set before us in the inspired Word are so transcendently bright that they overwhelm us; nor are we able to realize their details except as, more and more, we become transformed by the renewing of our minds, by the Spirit of the Truth.

The Model of Our Lesson

The model or ideal of this character lesson is found in the closing verses (23, 24). Here the Apostle holds up before our minds the culmination of the Christian character, which the preceding verses tell us how to attain. He says (R.V.), "The God of peace himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"; "Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it." In other words, this condition of complete sanctification is the Divine ideal before you and God will complete it in you if you will but follow the directions prescribed. Following these, every blow with the mallet and the chisel of self-control, and experience will gradually transform and shape us to the character likeness of our Lord.

"Sculptors of life are we as we stand
With our ungarbed souls before us;
Waiting the hour at God's command
Our ideal comes before us."

"If we carve it, then, on the yielding stone
With many a sharp incision,
Its heavenly beauty shall be our own,
Our life's beatific vision!"

Over You in the Lord

"We beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you."

While the Scriptures are very particular to maintain liberty of conscience for all of the Lord's people, and while they assure us that in Christ there is neither male nor female, neither bond nor free, but that his consecrated ones are "all one" in him, his members, nevertheless they distinctly set before us the thought that God is the supervisor of the affairs of his people and that their prosperity will result from their appreciation of the Lord's Headship and their recognition of those whom God hath "set in the Body"—apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers, helps, etc. The Lord's people are all children of God possessed of "the liberty wherewith Christ makes free," yet he has not given us a liberty to sin, but a freedom from sin, its slavery, its blight. These liberated ones, introduced by faith and consecration into the family of God, need to realize that the Father's house and all of its arrangements are under heaven's first Law—order. They must first learn to willingly and gladly submit to this order as the condition upon which they may abide in the Divine love and favor and participate in the family blessings. Neglecting to do so, they can never make progress into the deeper and more spiritual matters of that household, but, as babes unskilled and unruly, will be permitted to go no farther than the nursery.

The recognition of the Lord and the watching for his guidance through his Word and his promises will enable the Lord's people to discern the ones he has set over them in the Lord. While, therefore, in the Divine order, the Church is to select its own servants, each member is to "stretch forth his hand" in voting, not according to his own judgment merely, but according to his understanding of the Divine judgment or will. If, therefore, in the Lord's providence, our conception of the matter is not realized; if, under a fair understanding and vote, some one is set over the Church contrary to our conception of the Divine will, we are to be submissive and co-operate with such to the best of our ability; because recognizing the Divine wisdom and power we are to realize that the will of the majority of the consecrated is to be accepted as the Divine will. If sometimes the Lord may seem to permit things in the Church to go contrary to her highest interest, we are not to fear, but to trust everything to him and to content ourselves with a full and free expression of our judgment of the Lord's will, whether others see eye to eye with us or not.

The Apostle in our lesson takes for granted that the Church is acting in an orderly manner and has in the name of the Lord appointed some of their number to be over them in the Lord—to have a supervision and measure of control of the interests of the work. The Apostle urges that these be known, be recognized, not only personally, but in their capacity as servants in the Church and of Divine appointment through the Church. They are to expect admonishments from these. They are to realize that as faithful servants they must watch over the Church's interests. And all who love the Lord and the Truth should seek to cast as few difficulties in their way as possible and should do all in their power to uphold their admonitions and proper influence. These elect servants are supposed to labor amongst the brethren, as well as to admonish them. The service of the Church is not merely an honorary one. The word minister signifies servant and is a proper one and full of meaning—and more full of meaning than many seem to observe.

Continuing the Apostle urges, "Esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake." Permit no rivalry of spirit to come in to constitute in your own heart and in others a root of bitterness. Permit no unkind word of criticism to fall from your lips as against any servant of the Church. On the contrary, esteem them, honor them, as their position requires, for in a measure they represent the Lord. And honor them in proportion as their labors of love in the Church seem to merit. Thus, the more Christ-like will be the more loved.

Furthermore, St. Paul exhorts, "Be at peace among yourselves." Why not? Why was it even necessary to suggest peace, harmony, amongst those who had left the world behind, named the name of Christ, and come together as the followers of the Prince of Peace? What should hinder their peace? Surely each one of them must have known from experience something of the wrangle and jangle of the world. As sheep every one of them has been to some extent worried by the wolves, or at least threatened. Having come together, why should not these worried sheep have rest and peace and joy and comfort under the Great Shepherd's Son and his appointed under-shepherds over them in the Lord? This is the ideal peace, love, harmony. Of course, not peace at any price, not harmony at any price, but peace and harmony because Divine standards are well upheld and because the voice of the Master has been heeded in the choosing of the servants; because all have been seeking to know the Lord, to know his will, to know those whom he hath set over them in the Church; because all are hearkening for the voice of the Shepherd and striving against the self-seeking spirit in word and in deed. . . .

Let us each labor more and more towards these ends. Let us remember that while the Lord deals with us as individuals, he deals with us also collectively. While there is to be a development, shaping and polishing of the Christ-likeness in each of us individually, the same thought is to be preserved in connection with the Church as a whole. No man liveth to himself nor dieth to himself and no member of the Church of Christ is privileged to ignore the fellow-members. This is the Apostle's standpoint in this lesson.

"See That None Render Evil"

Of course, each is to see for himself, first, that he renders no evil to others; but secondly the Church should see to it that none of its members in fellowship so do without being admonished. As we have seen, this is specially the duty of the "Elders"—to watch out for all the interests of the flock and the relationship between the Church and others. The Church is the Lord's family, and whatever one member of this family may do that is contrary to Justice and Love will bring reproach or dishonor to all the members and specially upon the Head of the House—our dear Redeemer. On the contrary, we are to see that all "follow after that which is good, one towards another and towards all." This is the uniform teaching of the Scriptures. It expresses a higher principle and more exalted character than generally prevails. The man or woman who would forget a kindness or ignore a benefaction would be esteemed as "mean" by everybody, civilized or heathen. There the world draws its line and declares by action, if not by word, that enemies are to be hated, opposed and grilled as opportunity may offer. Anyone who would be uniformly good to friends, neighbors and enemies would surely be godlike, to such an extent that he would be out of touch with the sympathies of his neighbors and friends. He would be considered soft and unmanly if he did not oppose his enemies and inappreciative of his friends if he treated his enemies generously. But we are not to follow the world's ideals.

It was our Lord who set the example and gave the message, "Love your enemies. Do good to them that hate you and persecute you and speak evil of you." It was he who said, "If ye love them that love you, what thank have you? Do not publicans and sinners the same? But be ye like unto your Father in heaven, for he is kind to the unthankful and sends his rain and sunshine upon the evil and upon the good." Thus we see the spirit of the Lord manifested also through his apostles' words and the exemplification of these heavenly teachings should be manifest in the life of every follower of Christ. We are told we will thus glorify our Father which is in heaven, and thus also we shall form in ourselves and in others with whom we have influence the character-likeness of our Redeemer and of our Father.

"Rejoice Evermore"

From the worldly standpoint these must seem to be strange words to come from a man who for years had been serving Christ as a missionary, not only voluntarily depriving himself of the comforts of a home, the advantages of his station in life and training and Roman citizenship, but additionally enduring buffetings and scourgings, and, according to his own language, being treated as the "Filth and offscouring of the earth." Why should he think of rejoicing and, above all, why should he write to the Church at Thessalonica to rejoice? Was it not he that brought upon them the persecutions they had to endure? Without his message they would have known none of this. What an incongruous word to such people under such circumstances—Rejoice! Ah! the world knoweth us not, and it knows not the mainspring of our joy and peace. How can the world understand that those who receive the Divine message into good and honest hearts and the unction from the Holy One have a continual source of refreshment, not only in the Divine providential care in all of life's matters now, but additionally the inspiration of the "exceeding great and precious promises," which include the crown of glory and life eternal.

"Pray Without Ceasing"

To some, prayer at any time is irksome, tedious, but to the true Christian prayer constitutes one of the greatest of God's blessings. His privilege of approaching the throne of the heavenly grace to obtain mercy and also to find grace to help in every time of need, is a privilege the value of which cannot be too highly esteemed. The Lord's people are glad to assemble themselves frequently for prayer and worship, not only on Sunday, but in mid-week. They are glad to bow the knee in prayer every morning, giving thanks to the Giver of every good gift for the favors of life—for all of life's blessings and privileges. They are glad at the close of day to review it and to give God praise for his blessing and protection, for mercies enjoyed, for the promises fulfilled, for petitions answered. They are glad also to have the opportunity of recounting the experiences of the day and of making apologies and asking forgiveness for shortcomings, and to renew their vows of loyalty and faithfulness in the name and strength of the Redeemer. These blessed privileges of prayer belong to the Lord's family because they are his and have access to him continually through their great Advocate, their Redeemer.

However, the Apostle speaks of "praying without ceasing." What does he mean? We answer that the following statement is explanatory: "In everything give thanks." In a word, the life of an advanced Christian should be a life of prayer in the sense that a desire to know the Lord's will should be continually before his mind, and in every stress of life, in every trial, in every victory, in every undertaking, the will of the Lord should be sought and accepted and thanks should be given. The interest of the day committed to the Lord in the morning should be continually remembered as being in his loving care throughout the day. The experiences of life as they come should be accepted thankfully as under the Divine will; and **thanks should be rendered for them, whether agreeable or disagreeable to the natural man,** "For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." This is what would please God. This is living up to the high privileges his grace has provided for us. Let us seek more and more to live up to the very highest pinnacle of our privileges. Proportionately we will find ourselves nearer to the Lord, and developing in his character likeness and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God and the precious things which he has in reservation for those that love him.

"Quench Not the Spirit"

The Scriptures represent God as being a light. "God is light." In the Tabernacle he was represented by a brilliant light on the mercy-seat called the Shekinah glory. Our Lord Jesus, filled with the light of the holy Spirit, was called "the true Light." And it was he that said of his followers, "Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Similarly the Divine power at Pentecost was represented by flames of light, cloven tongues of fire. Similarly the Spirit of the Lord from his Word is in the Scriptures pictured as the blaze of light from a lamp. As we read, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, a lantern to my footsteps." The flame of sacred love, the holy Spirit of the Father and of the Son, was enkindled in our hearts through the Word of grace and the impartation of the holy Spirit. In proportion as we have fed this flame (the Spirit) with the Truth we have become burning and shining lights in the world—the Spirit of the Lord in us.

But how easily such a holy flame may be extinguished—how quickly too! A sufficient draft of the spirit of the world might extinguish our flame, quench it; or, even to put it under a bushel, we may shut off from ourselves the Divine supply of oil and spiritual oxygen and would soon quench the flame of love—the holy Spirit. We have not mentioned the Adversary; yet he is one of the potent influences to be contended against. He is continually attempting to get us into such a position as would extinguish our light and quench the Spirit. If not in one way, then in another our besetments come from the world, the flesh or the Adversary. Yet the Apostle intimates that we, and we alone, have the determining of the matter,—whether the holy Spirit in us shall be quenched or not. This is the Divine arrangement: We can take ourselves out of the Lord's hands if we choose, but neither saint nor sinner can do this for us. The Adversary himself is powerless to touch one of the Lord's "little ones" so long as he abides in him in faith, in love, in obedience. He himself, therefore, alone has to do with the matter, because God has promised that he will not suffer him to be tempted above that which he is able to endure, but will, with the temptation, provide a way of escape. As the flame of love is to be kept burning in our individual hearts so in the Church it is to be guarded, favored. . . .

"The God of Peace Himself"

Now we come to the concluding verses which we noticed at the beginning—the summing up, the character picture. If we follow the course outlined by the Apostle, God himself will sanctify us wholly, completely. Is not that what we desire? "Faithful is he that calleth us, who also will do all of his part." Hence the responsibilities lie with us.

The Apostle carries his argument beyond the individual question to the Church, the Spirit of the Church, the Soul of the Church, the Body of the Church, which he prayed might be preserved entire and without blame to the coming of Jesus. Undoubtedly it would have remained unto this day had it maintained its early and proper relationship to the Lord. But departing from this the Church at Thessalonica was not preserved. There is no trace of it today. Let us, individually and collectively as an Ecclesia of the Lord's people, seek to have this sanctifying power of God wholly, fully in control of every power in us, and of our tongue, that we may glorify God in body and spirit which are his.—Z. '09:186-189.

Feeding on the Words of God

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."—Matt. 4:4.

WE read that these words were a part of our Lord's answer to Satan when the Adversary exhorted Him to command the stones to be turned into bread, in order to satisfy His hunger, after fasting forty days in the wilderness. The Lord knew, however, that it would be unlawful for Him thus to use the superhuman power which came to Him as a result of His consecration to the Father's service. That power was not to be used for His flesh. Hence our Lord refused to use His superhuman powers for the gratification of the flesh, even though He hungered. Then Satan suggested, How do you expect to live if you do not exercise your power to live? Our Lord's answer, as we see, was that man shall not live by bread, merely, but by every word, every promise that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Our hope of eternal life, therefore, rests upon that obedience to God which would entitle us to eternal life, according to His arrangement. If our Lord had gratified the flesh He might have satisfied His hunger, but He would have violated His covenant of obedience to God. Whoever would have eternal life must seek to be obedient to God, to all that God has commanded, all to which He has directed the individual. Of course, He might have one command for the angels, another for man, and a third for the Church. But since we find that we are not able to obey perfectly every command of God, we cannot hope for eternal life by perfect obedience to the letter of the Word of God. Even though God has accepted us as His children, we can hope for life only by having the spirit of obedience to His Word.

One of the lessons to be learned in the School of Christ is that a "man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"—food and raiment, etc.—but that his life, in the fullest, highest, grandest sense, is dependent upon his complete submission to the Divine will. Careful attention to every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, to every admonition, every encouragement, every promise, is necessary to the development of those whom God is calling to eternal life. Let us, then, more and more, as the disciples of the Lord Jesus, keep in memory the words of the text, and act upon them.

Live By Every Word From the Mouth of God

But how is it possible for us to live by the words that proceed out of the mouth of God? What did Jesus mean? How can God's words give life?

He meant that all hope of attaining eternal life depends upon God—upon the Divine Plan and its promises. Looking into these promises we can see distinctly that the Divine Plan, dating from before the foundation of the world, is that all of God's creatures, created in His likeness and abiding in faith, love and obedience in harmony with Him, shall have life everlasting. This is God's Word upon the subject, namely, that **obedience** is the condition of life everlasting. This is, undoubtedly, what our Lord had in mind in the words of our text. He may also have had the thought that He had come into the world upon a special mission, to do the Father's will, and that His understanding from the beginning was that His perfect obedience to the Divine will would insure Him glory, honor and immortality with the Father, eventually; but that any disobedience would mean the forfeiture of Divine favor and would involve the sentence of disobedience—**death.**

Our Lord's prompt decision, therefore, was that to disobey the Father's will and thus to secure bread for the sustenance of His body, would be a great mistake; that food thus secured could sustain life for but a little while; that His better plan would be to trust in the Word of God, the Divine promise, that those who love and serve and obey Him shall ultimately come off conquerors and more, and have eternal life with God. And this, our Master's conclusion, is full of instruction for us who are His disciples, seeking to walk in His footsteps.

Discipline an Evidence of Sonship

One "word of God" which is very comforting to His children is His assurance of Parental care and discipline. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" (Heb. 12:7.) In this statement the word "chastening" should not be understood as meaning disapproval on the part of our Father, and sin on the part of the individual, but rather instruction. We are guided in the matter by remembering that although our Lord was a Son in whom there was no sin, yet He received, in the Father's providence, as a part of the "cup" poured for Him, various trials, disciplines. All of these experiences were very profitable, showing that the Father loved Him; that the Father had something which He was desirous that our Lord should do that He would not have been qualified to perform without some of these educational instructions and experiences.

Some disciplines, some chastisements, come as a result of our own mistakes and the natural consequences flowing from those mistakes and the apologies and heartaches which may necessarily follow them. God could save us from these experiences and so seclude and shelter our lives that we would not have anything to tempt us. But such is not His proposition. He wishes us to have these experiences that we may be guided in the right way and learn of our own weaknesses.

If we did not come into contact with various testing experiences we should not know where we are weak. Thus we learn where we can strengthen our characters and how we can be thoroughly developed. The Scriptures speak of our Lord Jesus as "enduring such contradiction of sinners against Himself." (Heb. 12:3.) Our trials, or disciplines, in meeting every opposition that can come to us, should bring more or less of correction in righteousness. Even if this would not mean outward stripes, we, in any event, would have our mental regrets, and thus we would get a form of correction, or discipline. Additionally, the Lord causes His children to come into peculiar trials as an example either to the brethren or to the world. In many of these, whatever the cause, we may understand them to be also corrections or instructions in righteousness.

Trial—Discipline—Necessary to the Perfecting of Our Characters

Character cannot be developed wholly without trial. It is like a plant. At first it is very tender; it needs an abundance of the sunshine of God's love, frequent watering with the showers of His grace, much cultivating with the applied knowledge of His character as a good foundation for faith and inspiration to obedience. Then, when thus far developed under these favorable conditions, it is ready for the pruning hand of discipline, and is also able to endure some hardness. Little by little, as strength of character is developed, the tests applied to it serve only to develop more strength, beauty and grace, until it is finally developed, perfected, fixed, established, through suffering.

This great work of developing and training character is necessarily a slow and tedious one, and not infrequently it is a painful process. But the Apostle plainly tells us that such things are necessary for the development of steadfast and enduring character. Consider how your own experience has verified this, you who have been for some time under the Lord's special care and leading. How much richer you are for all the lessons of experience, and for the patience and other spirit-fruits that experiences have developed in you!

Although, like the Apostle, you can say that "No chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. 12:11.) The lessons of experience and discipline have made you stronger. They have increased your faith and drawn you into closer communion and fellowship with the Lord. They have made you feel better acquainted with Him and enabled you to realize more and more His personal interest in you and His love and care for you. And this in turn has awakened a deeper sense of gratitude and an increasing zeal to manifest that gratitude to Him. This also deepens the sense of fellowship with God, and gives confidence to the hope of final and full acceptance with Him, made worthy through Christ.

Obedience the Test

Another helpful "word of God" is found in 1 John 2:5: "Whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." Here we have a test by which to determine our development. Only those who have **received** the Word of God can **keep** it, can retain it and comply with its requirements. The text suggests that it is a difficult matter to keep the Word of God. On all sides we hear various reasons why we should retain, hold fast the world, the flesh, rather than that which the Lord's Word holds out to us. There are many allurements to entice us from the "narrow way." Hence these who hold fast to the Word of God are "overcomers." . . .

The intimation is that unless we have the love of God we will not undertake to be obedient to His Word; that otherwise we can neither retain the Word of God nor be in accord with it.

Our Lord Jesus illustrated the perfection of obedience to the Word of God when He said, "I come to do Thy will, O God!" Everything written in the Book; everything that was God's will, He was glad to do at any cost. Our Lord Jesus could not have reached this degree of submission to the Divine will unless He had had love for the Father. And so with us. Unless we have love for God and the principles of righteousness we cannot continue in this way. . . .

The **test is obedience.** In proportion as we keep the Lord's Word, in like proportion the love of God is perfected in us; for if we have received the mind of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the effect will be to cause us both to will and to do His good pleasure to the extent of our ability. And this ability should be continually on the increase year by year.—Z. '11:387, 388.

Joseph Ruler in Egypt

Gen. 41:38-48.

Golden Text—"Them that honor me I will honor."—1 Sam. 2:30.

IN Egypt we find Joseph making the best of his new and trying circumstances. Having resolved to look upon the brightest side of things and to act upon the right side, he trusted in God and was cheerful and faithful in all his duties, whether they were agreeable duties or not. He acted thus, not from policy, but from principle —because he loved righteousness and desired the approval of a righteous God.

His faithfulness soon won his master's confidence; "and his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand; . . . and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand." And when, after some ten years of faithful service here, he was falsely accused and cast into prison, "and he was laid in iron and his feet were hurt with fetters" (Psa. 105:17, 18), with a clear conscience and a sense of the divine approval he determined to make the best of that situation also; and there too "the Lord was with him and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison"; and there, without any prospect of release, he remained faithful to God and duty for three years, when suddenly, the purposes of this discipline and proving having been served, God set before him an open door. He did not take him out of prison, but in pursuance of the pathway of benevolent helpfulness to others he led him out.

Wherever Joseph was, and no matter what were the circumstances, he did what was right and made the best use of the situation; and his faithfulness in all the little things prepared him for larger and wider fields of usefulness. He was rightly exercised by the experiences of life. He was kind both to the thankful and to the unthankful, generous to the mean as well as the noble, not allowing the injustice and harsh treatment which he received from others to harden his heart. And in all his course we see no signs of distrust in God or of complaining. In his trials he simply clung closer to God and took comfort in the manifestations of his favor, while he trusted where he could not trace him.

When God showed to Joseph the interpretation of the dreams of the butler and baker in prison, he recognized the favor as from God and thought he saw in the circumstance an open door to liberty once more. But the ungrateful butler forgot his benefactor, and for two years more he remained a prisoner. Then the door was swung open—this time, not only to freedom, but to honor and advancement, and Joseph was prepared to enter. His suggestion to Pharaoh of a wise course in view of the predicted famine was an evidence not only of his faith in God but also of a keen, active, business turn of mind. He thus taught that men should act upon their faith promptly and without wavering; and when he was chosen to pilot the nation through the threatening dangers of their future, he showed his great executive ability and his faithfulness there also. In this he was partly favored by inheritance from his father; but much was added to that by his own energy and force of character. **All the open doors to usefulness and honor are of no avail if we lack the energy and force of character to enter them** and to carry forward successfully the enterprises to which they lead. Faithfulness, purity of character, nobility of purpose, energy, courage, acquired skill, piety and self-discipline are all necessary to a successful life from God's standpoint.

Joseph's exaltation to the throne of Egypt, where he was second only to the king, may be regarded by some as the full reward of his faithfulness. But evidently Joseph did not so regard it. He still had respect to the promises of God: he did not lose his head and become puffed up with pride on being elevated from the position of a slave and a prisoner to a royal throne, but with the same steady dignity that characterizes a true man, he quietly went about the business of his new office with the same energy, competency, and faithfulness that had characterized him as a slave and as a son and brother in his father's house. His long acquaintance with God, especially under the discipline of adversity, had made him humble, and the graces of character grew beautifully in his prepared heart. But the throne of Egypt had never been the goal of his ambition; for, like Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, he looked for the heavenly city, the Kingdom of God. There was his treasure and there was his heart, and from thence he drew the inspiration of his noble life; and the court of Egypt was esteemed only for its privileges of helpfulness to others.—Z. '94:111.

The Kingdom in Tableau

Mark 9: 2-13.

"A voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear ye Him. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone."—Luke 9: 35.

OUR study is about Messiah's Kingdom of glory. It tells of a tableau illustration given to His disciples respecting it. The lesson deeply impressed the three Apostles who witnessed the vision, namely, Peter, James and John. St. Peter referred to it afterward in his Epistle (2 Pet. 1:16-19), saying, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of His Majesty . . . when we were with Him in the holy mount."

Jesus prepared His disciples for the transfiguration vision, saying, "There be some of them that stand here which shall not taste of death until they see God's Royal Majesty having come with power." The occasion will be remembered. Jesus had foretold His death, quite contrary to the previous expectations of the Apostles, and now He sought to draw their minds gradually to a realization that His death would not mean a repudiation of the promise of the Kingdom and its glory but a fulfilment of their expectations on a higher plane. Jesus would formally offer Himself to Israel as King riding upon the ass five days before His crucifixion; He would be despised and rejected and crucified; but His kingly office and work would thereby only be confirmed. His authority to be King of the earth, His authority to release mankind from the power of sin and death, His authority to uplift humanity and to bring the earth in general to Paradise conditions, would all be founded upon His sacrificial death at Calvary.

All this was presented to the three chosen disciples six days later. Jesus took them to the mountain-top and was transfigured before them. His flesh and His garments shone and glistened white, after the manner of angels, the vision thus representing the Lord after having experienced His resurrection change from earthly to heavenly conditions. Then with Him "talked two men," says St. Luke, "who appeared in glory"—radiant, but less so than Jesus.

In some manner they recognized these two men of the vision as Moses and Elijah. They heard these discourse with Jesus respecting His decease, "which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem," says St. Luke. How long the vision lasted we are not told, but St. Peter, thinking that he should make some comment on the situation, and not knowing what to say, suggested the building of three tabernacles, one for Jesus, one for Moses, one for Elijah. He evidently thought that the Master would be rejoiced at such blessed fellowship, and he was willing to do anything for His aid.

"This Is My Beloved Son"

Then came a voice from the overshadowing cloud, saying, "This is My Beloved Son, hear ye Him!" And suddenly the vision vanished, and they saw only Jesus with them, and He no longer with radiant appearance. What could it all mean? It may be that several good lessons came out of this: (1) During the six days following the announcement of the Master's coming suffering, ignominy and death, we may assume that the Apostles were sad-hearted, bewildered. In this condition it would be a great refreshment, and be strengthening to their faith to witness this vision which testified of Jesus they knew not what, but which showed them that the death He had foretold was a certainty and known of God and of Divine approval.

(2) The voice from the cloud would be a fresh encouragement to their faith. They had believed that Jesus was all that He claimed to be—the Son of the Highest. They had believed that He was not an ordinary member of the human family, born in sin, but that He had been particularly and specially born from above by Divine power. They had believed His own testimony that He proceeded forth and came from God and that He would return to the Father, but now their faith was corroborated; God Himself had testified in this miraculous manner that Jesus was His Son, His Well-Beloved, His Only One.

82 P.12 This is my Blood Son

"Tell No Man the Vision"

As the Apostles were coming down the mountain-side with Jesus, wondering about the meaning of the vision they had seen, Jesus said to them, "See that ye tell no man the vision until after the Son of Man is risen from the dead." (Matt. 17:9.) So "they kept the saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the Lord meant by the rising again from the dead." Thus, little by little, the Great Teacher impressed upon His true disciples great truths which they could not otherwise have learned, seeing that they had not yet been begotten of the Holy Spirit; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, the Pentecost blessing had not yet come, because Jesus had not yet suffered nor risen from the dead, nor ascended into the presence of God to make Sin-Atonement on their behalf.

The fact that Moses and Elijah appeared as real to the Apostles as though they were in life does not contradict the words of Jesus that what they saw was a vision. We are to remember the many visions given later on to one of these Apostles, St. John, recorded in the Book of Revelation. In those visions St. John saw angels and men, horsemen, beasts, crowns, etc., and heard voices and singing and talking, etc., just as in this vision.

The Meaning of the Vision

We have St. Peter's words (2 Pet. 1:16) in corroboration of the text here, that what they saw in the mountain represented the Royal Majesty of Messiah—the Kingdom of Messiah. Moses represented the faithful of Natural Israel, the "House of Servants"; Moses as a servant, was faithful over all his House." Elijah represented The Christ in the flesh, the House of Sons, which has been in process of development throughout the Gospel Age. All of the consecrated, spirit-begotten people of God, are represented by Elijah, who, God promised, should come before Messiah would set up His Kingdom. In other words, the Elijah class is composed of Jesus and all of His footstep followers throughout the Gospel Age—in their earthly or fleshly condition, spirit-begotten, but not yet spirit-born.

This Elijah company as a whole must be developed and must do a work in the world before the real Kingdom of Messiah can be established. The glorification of Jesus, following His death and resurrection, was due, but as the glorified One He stood between the Moses class, called previously, and the Elijah class, which had just begun to be called to be His joint-heirs in the Kingdom. He was thus in their midst, and the crucifixion at Jerusalem was about to fulfil all the conditions necessary to the bringing about of the Messianic reign.

But the glorification of Jesus was not the only thing necessary; the entire Church, the Body, must suffer with Him and be completed and then be joined with Him beyond the veil before the Kingdom glory can be fully established. This work of calling and preparing an Elijah class has been in progress for more than eighteen centuries and we believe is now completed. As John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus in the flesh, so this greater Elijah, the Church in the flesh, is the Forerunner of the great Messiah on the spirit plane. We must suffer with Him if we would share in His resurrection and share in His glory. This was the lesson of the transfiguration vision.

The disciples wondered and queried, saying, "Why do the Pharisees and Scribes tell us," according to the Scriptures, "that Elijah must first come." Jesus answered that, in a sense, to those who could receive it, John the Baptist had thus come, and had introduced Jesus as the Messiah, and that John the Baptist had in a sense fulfilled this prophecy when He introduced the Redeemer-King.

St. Peter's words, already referred to, fully satisfy us that the transfiguration scene was a vision of the coming glory of Christ—"We were eyewitnesses of His Majesty, . . . in the holy mount." Hence there is no doubt whatever that the promised Kingdom will eventually come. The vision on the mount confirms this to us. However, the prophecies of old, which foretold Messiah's coming and reign, are still more authentic, "more sure," they cannot fail; the Kingdom merely awaits the sufferings of those who will be the members of the Body of Christ. Then, at the Second Coming of Jesus, these will be blessed and glorified, and the class represented by Moses will also be blessed and used as instruments of the Kingdom. Thus in the vision the entire Kingdom was represented: first of all, by Jesus Himself, second by Elijah, who represented the Church class, and third by Moses, who represented the faithful on the earthly plane, through whom the Heavenly blessings will pour out upon humanity.

O, Master, it is good to be
Entranced, enrapt, alone with Thee,
Till we, too, changed from grace to grace,
Gaze on Thine own transfigured face."
—Z. 12:329, 330.

KERNELS KERNELS KERNELS

The causes of Christ on earth need men who are strong in will, courageous of heart and hardened to self-sacrifice, sufferings and the perils of conflict and death. None other can do the work that is needed to pull down the strongholds of sin, rout the enemies of righteousness and set forward in hostile territories the standards of the Kingdom of Christ.—Z. '03:84.

◆

God is able to supply all of our real needs in one way or another. It is for us to do with our might what our hands find to do, using our time and strength and talents in the Lord's service to the best of our judgment, and leaving all arrangements as well as results in his hand.—Z. '03:183, 184.

◆

We would fain say something that would be helpful. What shall we say?

We would remind you and ourselves that the amount of blessing that shall come to us each will depend almost entirely on the course we shall pursue in seeking those blessings. It will not depend on God; for he sets us at rest on that point, by assuring us in advance of his willingness to help and bless us, along certain lines which he has foreordained as the best and only proper ones. He thus throws the responsibility upon us. If we follow his directions we shall be blessed: to the extent that we shall neglect the Divine Counselor's instructions we shall surely fail of the blessings. It is thus that we are to obey the instruction, **"Keep yourselves** in the love of God." (Jude 21.) To those who thus obediently abide in God's love, the lights and the shades of life, its storms and its calms, its sorrows and its joys, are all blessings and helps onward and upward;—"Nearer my God to Thee."—Z. '98:3.

◆

We are not to attempt to hasten the divine plan, but to wait patiently for its unfolding—not to attempt to begin any work for the Lord unless we are sure that his time has come, and that he has called us to do it; then, like our Lord, to be instant in season and out of season, when convenient and when inconvenient, under favorable and unfavorable conditions; to do with our might what our hand has found to do,—what the Lord has called us to do. And further the most humble forms of labor are honorable when they are ours in harmony with God's providence.—Z. '00:15.

◆

The amount of truth now needed and supplied to God's household, and necessary to their sanctification and protection is much more than was necessary or provided to those in former times equally dear to God, and equally acceptable in sanctified character.

As the apostles declared, the peculiar trials of the end of this age necessitate the whole armor of God that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished. And now to be in darkness, in ignorance of the divine plan, would not only mean that we are exposed to attack and liable to fall, but furthermore, it would imply that we are not of the "brethren" who it is declared will not be in darkness now, and that we are not of the "household of faith" which it is declared will now be specially fed with "meat in due season"—"things new and old."—Z. '95:63.

◆

The art of **giving himself** is one of the secrets of a happy Christian life. He first gives his will to the Lord, then his time, his energy, his talents, to the Lord's service and for the Lord's people. He has pleasure in the giving and a blessing, whether others know it or not. By and by his time will come for receiving his full reward. To such the Lord will give eternal life, eternal glory and association with Himself in His Kingdom.—Z. '16:236.

◆

What a wonderful honor is conferred upon the most humble of the Lord's mouthpieces. "He that despiseth you, despiseth me, and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." If as the Lord's people we could always have this thought with us, it would certainly be a blessing to us in two ways:

(1) It would prompt us to feel the dignity of the smallest service rendered to the Lord's cause. It would banish fear of man and all feelings of weakness and trepidation. Recognizing ourselves as the Lord's representatives we would be courageous to go anywhere, to do any service called for in his commission and providential leading.

(2) This thought would bring to us such a sense of our responsibility that all the affairs of the present life would seem trivial and insignificant in comparison to the one great thing that we do — our heavenly mission and commission. We would be more dignified in manner, more earnest in our service as well as less careful of what man

might say of us. Our whole concern would be that we might please him who hath chosen us to be soldiers in his Royal Legion, to be ambassadors and heralds of the Kingdom and of its terms and conditions.—Z. '04:110.

◆

The Book of Nature and the Book of Revelation, when rightly read, harmoniously declare the glory of God; and blessed is the man whose character is ennobled and purified and blessed by constant meditation on these glorious themes. How it refreshes and strengthens every noble and generous aspiration, checks every tendency to evil and sin, purifies the heart, kindles hope, awakens zeal and starts and keeps us in the race with its glorious end in view.—Z. '92:111.

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Published for the Standfast Bible Students by the Star Construction Co., Ltd., Publishing Department. Address all communications to: STANDFAST BIBLE STUDENTS, Scott Building, Victoria, B. C.